

Commentary

VOLUME EIGHTY-FOUR • NUMBER TWO • AUGUST 1987

The Importance of Sidney Hook

Hilton Kramer

**A Farewell to
Civil Rights**
James Nuechterlein

**Can the Media
Be Reformed?**
Suzanne Garment

**Joanna Loves
Jesus—A Story**
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Report
That Never Was**
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Hebrew Prophets**
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Support
the Sandinistas**
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Books in Review

William H. Youngren / Edward Alexander / Larry D. Nachman /
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Commentary

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Letters from Readers

Poles and Jews

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I very much admire what Lucy S. Dawidowicz has done and is doing on behalf of Jewish culture and Jewish history, but what she has done to Marek Edelman in the pages of COMMENTARY borders on the unforgivable ["The Curious Case of Marek Edelman," March].

First, let me be clear about my relationship to Marek Edelman. He is a close and treasured friend. I do not know a living human being whom I admire more or cherish more than I do Marek Edelman. And he can usually defend himself very effectively, particularly when the enemies, like the Polish secret police, are close. Mrs. Dawidowicz has the advantage of distance and an Iron Curtain.

Now, a minor point. Mrs. Dawidowicz prefers Marek Edelman's earlier history of his experiences as a leader of the Warsaw Ghetto resistance, *The Ghetto Fights*, published in 1945, to the interviews with Hanna Krall in *Shielding the Flame*, currently published by Holt in the United States. But, she says, "the pamphlet and the very remembrance of it have disappeared down Poland's memory hole." That is mischievous nonsense. That pamphlet is being published and republished today by a whole series of Polish underground presses. . . . (Incidentally, I telephoned twelve booksellers in New York City, one in Westchester County, and New York's leading book wholesaler, *not one of whom* had a copy of *Shielding the Flame*, which I finally obtained directly from the publisher. Apparently Poland's underground publishing works more efficiently than ours does above ground.)

It is not beside the point that everywhere my wife and I traveled in Poland (both during Solidarity's glory and after Jaruzelski's putsch), the surest way to get VIP treatment was to say we knew Marek Edelman. Everybody in Poland seems to know about him, and everybody (except government toadies) respects him. Whenever he speaks at a church (which is common for oppositionists, including atheists), there are overflow crowds outside listening via loudspeakers.

Mrs. Dawidowicz is entitled to like or to abhor the literary forms in which Hanna Krall has struc-

tured her conversations with Marek Edelman. What she is not entitled to do is to perform psychoanalysis-at-a-distance to make his determination to remain in Poland appear irrational. On the basis of nothing—not even a hair from his head or a thumbprint—she concludes that "the pathology of orphanhood, a disease from which he has never recovered" explains the supposed irrationality which "has kept him chained to Poland."

On its very face, Mrs. Dawidowicz's attempt to divine Edelman's innermost soul from a mere three words ("My mother thought"), pulled from one of his many published interviews, is simply unmitigated *chutzpah*. Not surprisingly, she could not be further out in left field.

It happens that I discussed with Marek Edelman, in his own living room, the obvious question of his reasons for remaining in Poland even after his wife and both children had left.

Putting aside the barriers of acquiring a new language, a new culture, and a new set of common roots in another country, where else in the world could he fight so effectively, with such outstanding and loyal comrades (Jacek Kuron and Adam Michnik, to name only two of many), for socialism and human freedom and decency? Although Mrs. Dawidowicz does not credit it, Edelman was a factor in the opposition to Communist tyranny long before the emergence of Solidarity, and active in KOR long before it achieved prominence. As he points out, and I certainly agree, Solidarity, as long as it lasted, was among the most important social revolutions in recorded history, and a high point in man's attempt to make society more decent and humane.

We discussed some of his contemporaries who left Poland for the U.S. or Israel and who are held up by Mrs. Dawidowicz for Edelman to emulate. We could not name one whose life is or was as useful and enjoyable as his, right there in Poland.

Marek Edelman is not just residing in Poland; he is *living* there, and living a lot more excitingly and effectively than I am (or Mrs. Dawidowicz is, for that matter) in the United States. He is a recognized leader of one of the most im-

portant social movements anywhere in the world—which happens to be in Poland, his native country.

As for anti-Semitism, from which Mrs. Dawidowicz believes everyone should run as far away as possible, there is a good deal less in Poland these days than there was before World War II. The Polish Communists tried to promote anti-Semitism against the groundswell for democracy and socialism—and they found no one was listening.

If I were Marek Edelman, with his fantastic courage, with his large circle of socialist comrades and even wider circle of friends and admirers, with the opportunity to fight effectively for a better world, with the satisfaction of knowing that putting one's mark on history did not end with the Warsaw Ghetto—if I were Marek Edelman, I would certainly remain in Poland. Being a Jew is not the entire content of being a human being.

The Polish government would love to get Edelman out of Poland. They would gladly pay his way to New York or Jerusalem, and even stake him to a tailor shop or a newsstand. He leaves now and then, usually to visit his family, but each time he must negotiate for the assurance that he will be allowed to return.

Marek Edelman lives with four plainclothes government goons watching the two entrances to his apartment day and night; his rooms are thoroughly bugged; his phone is not bugged only because it is manually patrolled twenty-four hours a day. He certainly does not need to have Mrs. Dawidowicz shove a lay psychoanalytic shiv in his ribs.

I feel the need to respond to this cowardly attack, because Marek Edelman is at a serious communications disadvantage, and is, moreover, too modest and too much a decent human being to get into a hassle over personal reputation.

Lucy S. Dawidowicz's attack encompasses Norman Davies as well. He is in a better position than Marek Edelman to defend himself, so I will contribute nothing except the observation that calling Davies an anti-Semite is simply ludicrous.

LEONARD SHATZKIN
Croton-on-Hudson, New York

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

It is not for me to descend to the levels of good humor displayed by Lucy S. Dawidowicz in her

article on Marek Edelman and myself. I rather doubt whether anyone who knows me, or who has actually read my books, will give her much credence.

However, Mrs. Dawidowicz has unwittingly drawn attention to a state of affairs which many Americans find too embarrassing to discuss. Many of us were brought up to think of Jews as the natural allies of civil liberty and of intellectual tolerance. Mrs. Dawidowicz's performance can only fuel the opposite impression, namely, that, in a number of controversies relating to Jewish interests, the crudest examples of intolerance and indeed belligerence are emanating nowadays from the Jewish side, especially in America.

With regard to Polish-Jewish relations, this is a time in the U.S. when a distinguished task force is at work to foster dialogue and understanding. In England, an Institute of Polish-Jewish Studies, with its journal *Polin*, has recently been founded for the same purpose. In Poland, the regime seems to have modified its former hostility to Jewish topics, while a marvelously self-critical, and frequently philo-Semitic, debate is being conducted in both the Catholic and the underground press. In Israel, academic contacts are being renewed with Polish universities, and a major conference is in preparation for January 1988 in Jerusalem. Yet COMMENTARY, which is published by the American Jewish Committee, does not hesitate to give Mrs. Dawidowicz a platform for the most discordant sentiments.

Indeed, one must seriously wonder whether Mrs. Dawidowicz has any intention of contributing to the contemporary debate. As an ex-leftist, who is now the adherent of an ultra-chauvinistic, right-wing faction among the broad streams of Zionism, she may well have flipped from one extreme of the political spectrum to the other; but she shares the hallmark of all Communist polemicists, namely, the habit of trying to destroy her opponents' reputation, without examining their ideas. If such attitudes were ever allowed to prevail, we would soon find that anyone who chose to dissent from Mrs. Dawidowicz's version of the truth would be promptly hounded from the media and from academic life in general.

It is revealing, I think, that

Mrs. Dawidowicz's silly bull of anathema against Marek Edelman and myself does not actually say what the source of our offense is supposed to be. One suspects that it has less to do with the rights and wrongs of Poland's unhappy past than with the defense of a political dogma. Marek Edelman, though one of the greatest living Jewish heroes, does not happen to believe in Zionism. He has called the state of Israel "a historic failure," whose fate will be sealed as soon as American foreign policy changes tack. Norman Davies, though sympathetic enough to the broad-minded traditions of Israel's founding fathers, is not happy with the nationalistic trends of the last twenty years, and disagrees, in particular, with his subject, Polish history, being expounded in terms of American Jewish mythology and collective guilt. So, when Davies writes a favorable review about Edelman, Mrs. Dawidowicz takes double offense. Unable to brand Edelman an anti-Semite, she implies that he is psychologically unstable. Unequipped to cope with Davies's line of thought, she tries to suggest that his scholarship is worthless.

Mrs. Dawidowicz singled out my use of one quotation from Edelman, about the Poles being "a tolerant people" which she delicately suggested could be grounds for a suit of historical malpractice. Needless to say, she was making a mountain out of a molehill. But having explained the point at some length in my recent exchange with Abraham Brumberg (*New York Review of Books*, April 9, 1987), I see no need to repeat it here.

Mrs. Dawidowicz also writes that I am "well known" for my "virtuosity in erasing anti-Semitism from Polish history." It is odd that a hundred or so specialist reviewers, whose competence in the field is somewhat broader than that of Mrs. Dawidowicz, have all failed to notice such a spectacular feat. It may be that I sometimes use phrases such as "ethnic hatred" or "intercommunal antagonism," simply because I consider the conventional term, "anti-Semitism," to be greatly overworked. But that does not mean that the subject itself has been ignored. Let your readers judge for themselves! If the "computer error" which kept the paperback title out of the U.S. *Books in Print* has been rectified, *God's Playground: A History of Poland* (Co-

lumbia University Press) should be readily available from all American bookstores.

As the recipient of so many favorable reviews—see, for example, the *New York Times Book Review*, August 15, 1983—I may have become complacent about my book's ability to pander to all the political interests which Polish history stands to offend. But I am not unaware of its shortcomings. Nor can I fail to notice that generous critics have applauded perhaps the first anti-nationalist history of Poland which gives Polish Jewry (and other ethnic minorities) a prominent and honorable place in the narrative. To date, the only people to express their dismay have been the old-fashioned Polish nationalists—a group with whom Mrs. Dawidowicz seems to have a strong generic affinity.

Like Abraham Brumberg, Mrs. Dawidowicz is adept at railing against statements that were never made. She says, for instance, that "according to Davies, anti-Semitism . . . was an invention of the Zionists." Davies has never written anything remotely like that. She says that Davies "proceeds to assert repeatedly that there was good reason to dislike the Jews"—Davies has never asserted any such thing, even once—"who, being Communists, 'did much to launch the popular stereotype of the *Zydomunka*.'" On that subject, Davies wrote something entirely different. If space permitted, I would be glad to expose each of these apparently willful misreadings in detail.

Space permitting, I would also take issue with Mrs. Dawidowicz's version of Jewish life in prewar Poland, which must strike many informed readers as defective. For one thing, it is obsessively Judeo-centric, bypassing entirely the distress and exploitation of all other nationalities and social groups. For another, it is peculiarly slighting to the memory of the Polish Jews themselves, who for all their problems prior to the Nazi Holocaust, had great dynamism and achievements to their credit. By eternally harping on Polish anti-Semitism, Mrs. Dawidowicz paints a picture where the Jews in Poland appear as nothing more than pathetic, downtrodden victims. One would never guess that prewar Poland had its Jewish generals, its Jewish sportsmen, its Jewish film stars, its Jewish tycoons, its famous

Jewish professors, musicians, senators, writers, and actresses.

Mrs. Dawidowicz talks as if discrimination was something experienced only by Jews, for example in higher education. True enough, in the late 1930's there *were* some ugly anti-Semitic events, including the attempt to enforce a *numerus clausus*. Yet one has to recognize that in several prewar Polish faculties, especially in law and medicine, the Jewish student body formed an absolute majority. How many leading American universities can honestly claim that a *numerus clausus* has never operated on their campus? How many leading American universities, even today, can boast that ethnic minority students make up over half the entrants?

In all these matters, the main difference between Mrs. Dawidowicz and myself is one of proportion. Mrs. Dawidowicz seems to think that anti-Semitism is the main, if not the only, worthwhile theme in Polish history. I hold that anti-Semitism is one theme among many.

Without the least attempt at substantiation, Mrs. Dawidowicz dismisses my chapter on "The Jewish Community" in Poland for being "replete with errors, misconceptions, misrepresentations, and prejudices." Any freshman who made such bald assertions would be told to go away and do some homework.

Without citing any single example, Mrs. Dawidowicz charges me with the "peppering," and the editor of the *New York Review of Books* with the publishing, of "anti-Semitic tidbits." That sounds like a common slur.

Mrs. Dawidowicz sees fit to bruit it around that others have been "bruiting around" the activities of "Zionist cells." Clearly Mrs. Dawidowicz would not have repeated the unfounded rumors if she had not wanted them to be believed.

Yet these slurs, smears, and insinuations come from a woman who also wants to talk about "scholarly standards." Fair-minded readers will recognize Mrs. Dawidowicz's standards for what they are.

In which light, one begins to recognize the vocabulary. "Scholarly standards," it appears, are reserved for those whose opinions coincide with the chosen ideology. "Partisanship" is the word for opinions which are disliked but cannot be

contested. "Uncritical," "unscientific," or "unscholarly" are the words for discrediting people who fail to follow the ideological line.

To anyone who knows Eastern Europe, such tricks are all too familiar. A colleague from Poland now in the West once explained how, during the vicious anti-Semitic purge of 1968, the party contrived to dismiss virtually all the Jewish professors of Warsaw University. The victims were simply told that their work was "unscholarly," and were advised that their contracts would be terminated. They were denied all means of demanding an explanation, then warned to keep quiet, and told to leave the country as soon as possible. In a Communist state, where the same party clique controls the courts and the media, as well as the universities, there was no way either to publicize the fraud or to fight it. Fortunately, in the U.S. things are not yet so bad.

With regard to the Stanford lawsuit, I have repeatedly refrained from comment. However, since Mrs. Dawidowicz has not shrunk from using COMMENTARY's pages to pass judgment on a case about which she cannot properly possess any inside information, I feel obliged to offer some clarification. (If, on the contrary, Mrs. Dawidowicz *does* claim to be authoritatively informed, my lawyers would be happy to make arrangements for receiving her evidence.) It is important to recognize that I am *not* challenging the right of a great American university to decide on its own appointments, even in those instances where the decision may be based on ignorance and incompetence. Nor do I challenge the principle of confidentiality as properly applied to academic appointments. Least of all am I suggesting that the numerous Jewish faculty and officials at Stanford were mobilized into some sort of vast Semitic cabal. The suit is based on other considerations. Among the various causes of action, headed by misrepresentation, the suit has emphasized Stanford's departure from normal academic procedures: Stanford's failure to honor its contractual obligations; Stanford's admission of nonacademic criteria into an academic appointment; Stanford's acceptance of secret accusations concealed at the appropriate time even from the search committee; Stanford's subsequent publica-

POLISH-JEWISH STUDIES

An Appeal for Support

The Institute for Polish-Jewish Studies at Oxford, and its US wing the American Foundation for Polish-Jewish Studies in Boston, Chicago, New York and Miami, both of which emerged out of the International Conference on Polish-Jewish Studies held at Oxford in September 1984, were established to:

- preserve the unique heritage of Polish Jewry;
- foster research into the history and culture of Polish Jewry on an interdisciplinary and international basis;
- make the results of this research available to the public by means of lectures, seminars, conferences, publications and documentary films;
- focus the attention of the European and American public and especially of Jewish and Polish communities in the West on what is most significant and precious in the legacy of Polish Jewry.

To achieve these goals the Institute has set up an International year book, *POLIN: A Journal of Polish-Jewish Studies* (Blackwells, Volume 1, Autumn 1986).

Other activities undertaken by the Oxford Institute and the American Foundation include:

- the British première of Claude Lanzmann's 'Shoah' at Oxford, followed by an international conference on the Holocaust, attended by scholars from America and Europe, including Israel and Poland (September 1985);
- a book on the history and culture of Polish Jews, entitled *The Jews in Poland*, based on the proceedings of the 1984 Oxford conference (Blackwells, 1986);
- providing scholars from Israel, Poland, Hungary and elsewhere with facilities enabling them to come to Oxford to study Polish-Jewish topics (in association with St. Anne's College, Oxford);
- grants to students and scholars from the Jagiellonian University, Cracow, to study in Israel and vice-versa (in association with the Hebrew University of Jerusalem);
- the annual Emmanuel Ringleblum Memorial Lectures at Oxford devoted to Holocaust studies;
- collecting funds to aid the work of the Citizens Committee for the protection of Jewish Cemeteries and Cultural Monuments in Poland;
- co-organizing with the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and Yad Vashem an international conference on Polish Jewish Studies, planned to take place in Jerusalem in 1988;
- organizing and sponsoring the Arthur Rubinstein Centenary Celebration in the Royal Festival Hall, London, on Sunday 25th January 1987 in the presence of HRH The Princess of Wales.

We appeal to you to contribute generously so that these important and valuable activities can continue. The American Foundation for Polish-Jewish Studies is registered as a non-profit corporation and all contributions are fully tax deductible.

The aim of the Institute and the Foundation is to establish an endowment of \$1 to 1.5 million. This will enable them to spend \$100,000 per year on their activities. In this context, it should be stressed that the Foundation cannot raise an endowment on this scale without significant contributions of 'seed money'.

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tion of bogus and unsubstantiated criticism of the candidate's scholarship and teaching; Stanford's public manipulation of confidential references; Stanford's defamatory press releases concerning my "pernicious" and "egregious" self; Stanford's formal denial to an academic employee of the standard provisions for grievance and appeal.

Recourse to the law was necessary, not because Stanford's own hearing of the case produced unsatisfactory results, but because Stanford ruled out any sort of internal hearing whatsoever. It is difficult without going into great detail to explain what exactly is involved. But many who know university procedures will rightly suspect the academic equivalent of insider-trading.

When the time comes to discuss the case fully and openly, I have no doubt that it will be quickly resolved. I am confident that the people who come to my assistance will include both courageous Jewish colleagues from California, and specialists in the field from the United States, from Europe, and from Israel.

In their different ways, both Poles and Jews are traumatized nations; and it is not surprising that memories of World War II in Poland still provoke pain for all concerned. Since some three-quarters of Jews in the world today can trace their origins to historic Poland, it is only natural that American Jews should have strong feelings about Polish history. All one asks is that the subject be approached with restraint, and with respect for a variety of honest differences of opinion. If Americans were only better informed, they might find that Poles and Jews have much more than suffering in common, and that each side has much to admire in the other.

NORMAN DAVIES

University of London
School of Slavonic and East
European Studies
London, England

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

With utter dismay and regret I read "The Curious Case of Marek Edelman" by Lucy S. Dawidowicz. I was a member of the editorial staff of *Tygodnik Powszechny* and am now a Fulbright scholar at Northwestern University. . . .

Mrs. Dawidowicz has a right to dislike Hanna Krall's *Shielding the*

Flame, a book which I, and many other people in Poland, esteem very highly. But I was surprised that her criticism was based not on the book's contents but on what Hanna Krall did not write, a kind of criticism we had become used to in Poland during the Stalinist period.

The point of my letter, however, is not Mrs. Dawidowicz's literary taste, but her discussion of the personal choices of a man I know and greatly respect, Marek Edelman. I am afraid he will not be able to answer, anyway not on the level set by Mrs. Dawidowicz.

The entire article consists of a strong attack against Marek Edelman for his decision to stay in Poland, a decision Mrs. Dawidowicz calls "morbid, perhaps even macabre." She says that he has never explained this decision. To start with, I do not think that any personal decision should be the subject of public explanation. But in the case of Marek Edelman, it is simply not true that he has not explained this decision. He once said during a public meeting in Poland that the question of why he did not leave Poland was asked many times by the secret police, and his answer was: "And why did you not go?" It is very sad that the same question is now being asked in a very abusive way in an American magazine.

Mrs. Dawidowicz says that all Edelman's friends left Poland. But among the 37.5 million people who still live in Poland perhaps there are some with whom Edelman has struck strong bonds of friendship?

Mrs. Dawidowicz says several times that Poles are anti-Semites. . . . Though I do not deny that among Poles, as among many other nations, there were and still are anti-Semites, I can also assure Mrs. Dawidowicz that there are also Poles who have never looked at people according to their race or origin.

Mrs. Dawidowicz says that Marek Edelman "certainly . . . never displayed any Polonist passion." This is not only untrue, but offensive. Edelman was active in the Solidarity movement. . . . Now, perhaps Mrs. Dawidowicz has never heard of Solidarity and does not know what it meant for Poland. But if this is the case, it is better not to write about the personal choices and passions of anyone in Poland, where, apart from prewar anti-Semitism, there are still other

problems and issues which are worth devoting one's passion to. . .

MACIEJ KOZŁOWSKI
Northwestern University
Evanston, Illinois

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

In her article, Lucy S. Dawidowicz confronts unwelcome information with the same apologetic and manipulative behavior for which she condemns others. Mrs. Dawidowicz has her image of Poland and the Poles, and she cannot bear to have it challenged, either implicitly by Marek Edelman, the last surviving commander of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising, or explicitly by Norman Davies, the British historian.

Edelman . . . continues to reside in Poland. Since his choice of residence conflicts with the stereotype that all Poles are vicious anti-Semites, Mrs. Dawidowicz was compelled to use psychological jargon to denigrate his decision to remain in Poland. Davies . . . has written some home truths about Polish-Jewish relations that have long needed saying. For this Mrs. Dawidowicz subjects him to a splenetic attack in which she fabricates loaded phrases like "academic franchise of the Elders of Zion," and imputes them to Davies. If the Stanford professors whom Davies is suing for misrepresentation and defamation behaved as Mrs. Dawidowicz does, then he has a good case.

Mrs. Dawidowicz criticizes Davies for his "ludicrously mistaken assumption that Edelman is something of a Polish patriot—a point about which Davies is as wrong as he has been about everything else in the history of the Polish Jews." Marek Edelman became active in the Solidarity movement and was a delegate to Solidarity's 1981 convention in Gdansk. When Edelman was introduced to the delegates, who comprised the most notable assembly of Polish patriots in recent years, they cheered him as a Polish patriot; and, as Hanna Krall reports, Edelman was very gratified by their recognition. Under these circumstances, it is Mrs. Dawidowicz's denial of Edelman's Polish patriotism that is itself ludicrous.

It turns out that Davies is right about other things as well. The divergence between the Bund and the Zionists is not something Davies invented, as Mrs. Dawidowicz

implies. Antony Polonsky states in his *Politics in Independent Poland 1921-1939*, "On the Jewish national question, the Bund attacked all other Jewish parties, but especially the Zionists and the Orthodox. Nevertheless it demanded national cultural autonomy for the Jews, with a state-sponsored school system based on Yiddish." There is a great difference between cultural autonomy inside Poland and emigration to Palestine. This difference influenced each group's assessment of conditions in Poland, and it is very appropriate, indeed necessary, to take this influence into account, as Davies has done.

Regarding discrimination and persecution against Jews in interwar Poland, Mrs. Dawidowicz claims that "Davies does not mention such unpleasant matters in *God's Playground*." In fact, Davies does mention these matters on pages 260-63 of Volume II of his book. He goes on to write, "These facts are incontestable. The difficulty is to put them into some sort of meaningful perspective." Mrs. Dawidowicz and Davies may have differing perspectives, as is their right, but I submit that Davies's perspective is nearer the truth than Mrs. Dawidowicz's, as expressed in her article, . . . where she writes: "The Polish Jews did not need to be brainwashed by Zionist propaganda. They knew from the bitter experience of their own lives, day in, day out, that they were being starved, economically strangled, pressured to leave the country." Joseph Marcus, a British economist of Polish Jewish descent, presents a much different picture in his study, *Social and Political History of the Jews in Poland 1919-1939*. He writes: "Objectivity also requires us to put in a correct perspective the reasons for Jewish poverty. The Jews in Poland were poor because they lived in a poor, underdeveloped country. Discrimination added only marginally to their poverty. . . . That Jewish poverty was mainly the result of accumulated discrimination against them is a myth and it is time to expose it as such."

Marcus estimates 1929 per-capita income (expressed in zlotys) as 830 for Jews and 585 for non-Jews. He also estimates that Jews, who were about 10 percent of Poland's population, held 20 percent of the national wealth. Marcus asserts that, broadly speaking, in the 1930's "the overall position of the Jews in the

Polish economy did not significantly change: in fact, in some respects it improved." . . .

Of course, such statistics and generalizations would have been cold comfort to an individual Jew who was unemployed and penniless. However, these data are part of the truth that must be included in any account of interwar Poland. Regrettably, some Jewish historians appear to be motivated by the motto, *De Polonia nil nisi malum*. . . .

Marek Edelman is indeed a "curious case" for those Jewish writers obviously made uncomfortable by his very existence. . . . Mrs. Dawidowicz attributes his residence in Poland, where he has had a fruitful career as a cardiologist, to psychopathology. . . . I have a simpler explanation: Edelman really is a Polish patriot, and he feels his place is with the oppressed. "Never mind who is being beaten, I believe you always have to take his side." This quotation is taken from an interview with Edelman published in the Polish underground journal *Czas*, in December 1985. Mrs. Dawidowicz and others, by selective quotation, have attempted to use this interview to make of Edelman a severe critic of the Poles who would confirm their preconceptions. Actually, a reading of the whole interview shows Edelman to be a reluctant critic, who has to be drawn out with repeated questions from his young interviewers. Moreover, his account is balanced. When he tells how he was held for court-martial as a spy by some members of the Polish underground Home Army, he also tells how Aleksander Kaminski, editor-in-chief of the Home Army's main publication, *Biuletyn Informacyjny*, arranged for his release. When he recalls that the Home Army gave an insufficient supply of arms to the Ghetto fighters, he also notes that "They themselves were weak." This balance is not evident in Mrs. Dawidowicz's article.

Edelman is a blunt and candid man, and he remembers things others would prefer to be forgotten. He is not only an iconoclast, he refuses to be an icon himself. For this Mrs. Dawidowicz asks, "Has he become a *Nestbeschmutzer*, befouling the nest he was raised in?" This question gives away Mrs. Dawidowicz's stance: it is a question that would be asked by a partisan, an advocate, or a propagandist, but not by a historian.

Mrs. Dawidowicz concludes her article with a call for the "proper reconstruction" of the history of the Polish Jews. Her treatment of Edelman and Davies belies that call, unless one understands "reconstruction" as alteration and "proper" as conforming to her party line—and No Polish (or British) Need Apply.

CHARLES CHOTKOWSKI
Fairfield, Connecticut

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . As a Jewish Pole who lived in Warsaw throughout World War II until 1957, I find the issues Lucy S. Dawidowicz deals with—the Holocaust and Jewish-Gentile relations—poignant. But I detest the hate-the-Poles ramble [of] her quasi-diatribes against Norman Davies, a British historian, and against Marek Edelman, a leader of the 1943 Warsaw Ghetto uprising. The real message of Mrs. Dawidowicz's article is: let's hate the Poles, not the Germans! . . .

Does Mrs. Dawidowicz truly believe in the sameness of (1) the Polish Communist government; (2) Poland (the nation); and (3) a scattering of riffraff nurtured and shielded in Poland by the barbaric German occupiers? I think she is smarter than that. . . .

Some Nazi apologists deny the existence of the Holocaust or blame it on others. Witness the recent wave in the media of not-so-clumsy miswordings of Nazi death camps in Poland as "Polish death camps." In her four pages on the German Holocaust of Jews, Poles, and others, Mrs. Dawidowicz refers to things German or Nazi only twice, while to the Poles or Poland she awards sixteen explicit associations with the term "anti-Semite."

Yet she never clarifies what it is that makes an "anti-Semite." There were Polish patriots, politically opposed to multiethnicity, who nonetheless protected the Jews from the Germans, and risked torture and death for themselves and even for their loved ones. How would Mrs. Dawidowicz label these Poles? She evades that need for clarification by replacing the catchword "anti-Semite" with the more abstract catchwords "anti-Semitism" or "anti-Semitic." "Anti-Semitism" is impersonal: it can simply exist and—like a germ!—infect. . . . As Norman Davies writes, "The word 'anti-Semitism' appears to be infinitely elastic, being applied to everything

from the advocacy of genocide to a dislike for bagels" (*New York Review of Books*, April 9, 1987).

Mrs. Dawidowicz attacks Davies for saying that "Polish hostility toward the Jews" was "complemented by the Jewish hostility toward the Poles." But Davies is not fabricating; the Poles' centuries-long struggle for political and ethnic survival notwithstanding, only 12 percent of Poland's Jews in 1931 declared Polish their first language (Antony Polonsky, *Politics in Independent Poland, 1921-1939*). . . .

Mrs. Dawidowicz scolds Davies for saying that Edelman is a Polish patriot. . . . Yet she admits: (a) a large community of Polish patriots freely elected Edelman a regional delegate to Solidarity's 1981 congress—and he accepted; and (b) later, he was jailed for his political activity.

So, in conclusion, I think Marek Edelman is a Polish patriot. But Mrs. Dawidowicz claims to know better. In her blunt denial of Edelman's patriotism, she shakes hands with other rabid anti-Semites. . . .

STEVEN H. KON

Albany, New York

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

As Lucy S. Dawidowicz has seen fit to meddle in the unfortunate case of Stanford versus Norman Davies, albeit via an assault on Marek Edelman, I would like to call attention to some incorrect statements and improper assertions in her article.

First and foremost, Norman Davies never applied for the McDonnell Chair of East European Studies at Stanford University. Rather, he was invited to teach at Stanford as a potential candidate for that position. It is his own contention that he was led to believe that his receipt of the chair was merely a formality. The *unanimous* endorsement he received from the committee of East European experts founded to evaluate his credentials seems to support his sentiment. Perhaps Mrs. Dawidowicz should require that COMMENTARY adhere to the same rigorous injunction to check the "facts" that she demands of the *New York Review of Books*!

Secondly, it seems curious that Mrs. Dawidowicz would have Norman Davies sued for, of all things, historical malpractice simply because he quotes Marek Edelman's statements on historical matters. Apparently, the fact that Edelman,

whether one wishes to agree with him or not, was an eyewitness to the Holocaust and should have some point of view on the colossal tragedy does not seem to warrant consideration of his reflections as part of the historical record. But later, curiously enough, his reflections on his mother provide more than sufficient justification for Mrs. Dawidowicz to employ a convoluted psychological analogy to answer the question that Edelman answers himself. After all, why does anyone stay anywhere when he has the freedom to leave? Because he's happy where he is.

Mrs. Dawidowicz continues her attack by condemning Davies's *God's Playground*, a book we must assume she has read, although she never quotes from it to sustain her conclusion that it "contains a chapter on the Polish Jews that is replete with errors, misconceptions, misrepresentations, and prejudices." Mrs. Dawidowicz requires that we trust her as an honest midwife for Davies's ideas. However, when she states that Davies "proceeds to assert repeatedly that there was good reason to dislike the Jews, who, being Communists, 'did much to launch the popular stereotype of the *Zydokomuna*'—the 'Jew Communist,'" she runs into that old schoolboy nemesis, context, for, as Davies actually writes concerning Russian Jews who fled Russian pogroms and political persecution by relocating in the Polish lands of the czarist empire:

In Polish eyes, these "alien Jews" were largely responsible for disrupting the supposed harmony of earlier Polish-Jewish relations. Unwittingly, they certainly did much to launch the popular stereotype of the "*Zydokomuna*," associating Marxism and Communism with Russian Jewish intellectuals, which was destined to enjoy a long currency in Poland. [*God's Playground*, Vol. II, p. 252]

Finally, some thoughts beg a thorough airing from those who experienced Norman Davies on a daily basis and got to know him as teacher in addition to scholar. As a history major at Stanford, I had two classes with him, one of them a seminar course on Poland during World War II. Rarely have I seen a subject as tragic as the suffering of Jews in Poland, specifically during World War II, treated in a more sensitive and dedicated manner. The examples abound—

the lecture by Bruno Szatyn on his survival during the war, a Jew masquerading as a Pole to save his family and himself; the lecture by the Polish courier Jan Karski, concerning among other subjects his inability to convince the Allies of the magnitude of murder in Nazi-occupied Poland; a student's in-class reading of the poem "*Campo di Fiori*" by Nobel Laureate Czeslaw Milosz. In addition, written testimonies were assigned to each student, testimonies that concerned some aspect of the occupation of Poland. Having read such works as Elie Wiesel's *Night* and Viktor Frankl's *Man's Search for Meaning*, I read Jan Karski's *The Story of a Secret State*. I invite Mrs. Dawidowicz and others who, secondhand, claim to "know" what happened to put academic quarrels aside and ask themselves whether this is the type of work someone who is "wrong as he has been about everything else in the history of the Polish Jews" would encourage a student to read.

I do not ask that my word alone be taken. Perhaps COMMENTARY will hear a more telling testimony from the student who prepared a presentation on the Holocaust, a student who based her research on two works assigned by Davies, . . . one of which was Lucy S. Dawidowicz's *The War Against the Jews 1933-1945*.

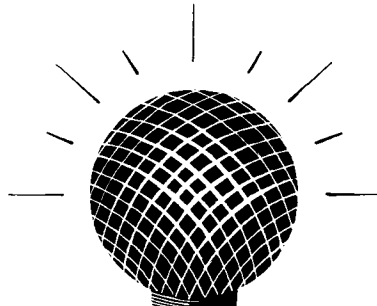
CHRISTOPHER DEROSA

Hoover Institution
Stanford, California

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Lucy S. Dawidowicz is being unduly charitable to the historical profession and its processes of peer review when she suggests that Norman Davies's *God's Playground* is being used as a college text "*faute de mieux*." The disturbing fact is that, notwithstanding its apologia for Polish anti-Semitism, Davies's book received enthusiastic scholarly acclaim upon publication. A sampling of reviews: "Dr. Davies . . . brings to the study of his subjects some sterling moral and intellectual qualities: impartiality, candor, sympathy, and a passion for truth" (*Historical Journal*, December 1983); the book is "unrivaled as a comprehensive history of Poland" and an impressive achievement for a single scholar, a "magnum opus," specifically noting that "Poland since 1918 is very well covered" (*English Historical Re-*

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view, October 1984); "a remarkable book," "a major work that is imaginative, thought-provoking, and extremely well written" (*American Historical Review*, April 1983); a "truly magnificent work," "the best introduction available to the incredible imbroglio of Polish history" (*New Republic*, November 15, 1982); "a very substantial achievement" (*London Times Literary Supplement*, March 19, 1982).

Whatever the problems with Norman Davies's approach to the history of Polish Jewry, they are, apparently, not his problem alone.

HENRY D. FETTER
Los Angeles, California

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

The point made by Lucy S. Dawidowicz about the loss of remembrance in Poland is a valid and important one. It should be mentioned, however, that this is not the first time that the accuracy of Marek Edelman's memory has been questioned. In an interview given to a French journalist (*L'Express*, May 5, 1975), Edelman commented on several salient aspects of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising. In an authoritative rebuttal (*L'Express*, July 28, 1975; for a fuller version, see *Le Monde Juif*, July 1975), the historian Adam Rutkowski pointed out that a number of Edelman's statements are contradicted by other sources and by Edelman's own account which appeared in Warsaw in 1945.

GASTON L. SCHMIR
Yale University
New Haven, Connecticut

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

From Lucy S. Dawidowicz's lucid article one can infer that the decision by Marek Edelman to remain in postwar Poland is strange and bizarre.

It may indeed require a psychiatrist to investigate the motives for Edelman's action or, rather, his lack thereof. Did he imagine that by remaining passive he could demonstrate his solidarity with his fallen comrades, indeed with all the victims of the Holocaust? Perhaps that also explains his conviction that the deportees to the death camps "were no less honorable, no less heroic than those who died" fighting the Nazis.

Yet justice and fairness demand that one recall the bravery of dedicated and morally responsible Jewish professionals, rabbis,

teachers, and physicians who tried to be of service in spite of persecution and at the grave risk of physical annihilation. Perhaps, then, Marek Edelman, a doctor dedicated to his patients' well-being, perceived his duty in a similar manner and thus took literally his pledge as a healer to uphold the Hippocratic oath.

HENRY REGENSTEINER
New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

In "The Curious Case of Marek Edelman" Lucy S. Dawidowicz says of Marek Edelman's 1945 book, *The Ghetto Fights*, that "the pamphlet and the very remembrance of it have disappeared down Poland's memory hole." Not quite so. The hole is deep and many things have been pushed down it, but there are efforts to dig out at least part of what has been buried there. Edelman's pamphlet was reproduced in 1983 in Poland by the underground publishing house CDN in an edition of a few thousand copies.

Regardless of whether the Communist regime in Poland is in a bellicose mood or wants to have a little détente, . . . it always hunts out underground printers, editors, and distributors. But the publishers keep on publishing books—a few hundred titles a year. . . .

Since independent thought is incompatible with Communism, one fears that once the Jaruzelski regime receives new loans guaranteed by the U.S. government, independent publishing will become the first liability and bulldozers will try to push independent words down the memory hole once again.

IRÈNE LASOTA
Paris, France

LUCY S. DAWIDOWICZ writes:

After letting the smoke clear from the barrage of vituperation unloosed by my critics, I see that these broadsides against me deal with three subjects: (1) what I wrote about Marek Edelman; (2) what I wrote about Norman Davies; and (3) what is euphemistically called Polish-Jewish relations or, if you will, the Jews in the mind of the Poles.

1. *Re Marek Edelman*: Edelman's defenders (Leonard Shatzkin, Norman Davies, Maciej Kozłowski, Charles Chotkowski, and Steven H. Kon) accuse me of having impugned Edelman's integrity and

detracted from his stature as a public hero. I committed this terrible deed, it turns out, by having offered a psychological, rather than a political or ideological, explanation for Edelman's staying behind after his friends and fellow combatants in the Warsaw Ghetto uprising left Poland and for continuing to stay even after his wife and children left. They object to my conclusion that Edelman's decision to remain in Poland was not based on purely rational political grounds and therefore they attack the method I used to reach that conclusion. But it is entirely legitimate for a historian to take account of the private underpinnings of a public life, especially when no other explanation will fit the evidence at hand.

Like everyone else in the world, Edelman was shaped by the experiences of his childhood. His childhood, to his enduring sorrow, proved to have been more traumatic than most. A psychological explanation of the effects of that childhood is more persuasive than the rhetoric which Edelman's defenders offer. They seem to think there is something shaming in invoking psychology to explain behavior that would otherwise remain baffling, probably because they will not concede that a bonafide hero like Marek Edelman can be a mere mortal, that he too can be driven by the impulses of his unconscious. In their defensiveness, they do not realize that the particular psychological explanation which I proposed in no way disparages Edelman's political courage.

In justifying Edelman's remaining in Poland, Mr. Shatzkin says: "Being a Jew is not the entire content of being a human being." Does that assertion mean that becoming a Polish patriot provides more fulfilling content in one's life than being a Jew? Or is Mr. Shatzkin suggesting that Edelman has abandoned the Jewish commitment he once had as a Bundist and for which he risked his life in the Warsaw Ghetto uprising?

Though Edelman's defenders cite his devotion to Solidarity as evidence of his Polish patriotism, they haven't persuaded me. As I see it, Edelman must have found in Solidarity the very embodiment of the ideals and values which his mother had taught him. Solidarity must have reminded him of his

Bundist youth in Poland, when the Bund was similarly engaged in a struggle for the rights of labor, for justice and equality.

I am glad to be informed that Edelman's pamphlet of 1945 has been available in Poland. So much the worse for Hanna Krall, who did not do her homework in trying to tell the story of Edelman's life.

2. *Re Norman Davies*: Mr. Davies defends himself with the verbosity that is a hallmark of his style and he has troops (Christopher DeRosa and Messrs. Chotkowski, Shatzkin, and Kon) in his defense. They all laud Mr. Davies's accomplishments as a historian, but none produces evidence to confirm his competence as a historian of the Jews of Poland. Nor will Messrs. DeRosa and Davies admit that Davies misunderstood or falsified the intent of Edelman's words about the Poles being "a tolerant people." Mr. Davies says I am making a mountain out of a molehill and that he has already explained that misinterpretation of his in the *New York Review*. That is not so. He fudged it there, neither denying nor admitting his egregious misreading of Edelman's words, and he has fudged it here. So much for his talk of scholarly standards.

Mr. Davies's version of the history of the Jews in Poland bears little resemblance to the past as it actually happened. The discrepancy is largely accounted for by what I characterized as Mr. Davies's "virtuosity in erasing Polish anti-Semitism from the history books." (He cannot even quote my words correctly.) I have not been alone in remarking on that. Bernard Wasserstein, in the (London) *Times Literary Supplement*, October 10, 1986, referred to "Norman Davies's recent history of Poland in which post-1918 anti-Semitism is sanitized almost out of existence."

As for his bias against the Jews (which, incidentally, shows through in some offensive insinuations in his letter above), I will cite one more illustration to supplement what I wrote in my article. This comes from the notorious chapter in Mr. Davies's book *God's Playground*, "Zydzi: The Jewish Community." In discussing the murder of the Jews during World War II, Mr. Davies defends the Poles from charges, which he says Jewish writers have unfairly made against

them, that they either rejoiced at the fate the Jews suffered or were indifferent at best. He then says: "To ask why the Poles did little to help the Jews is rather like asking why the Jews did nothing to assist the Poles."

No one with even the most superficial knowledge of World War II and the fate of the Jews could equate the situation of Poles and Jews under the German occupation. Anyone familiar with the bare facts would straightaway recognize the wrongness and—yes—the wickedness inherent in making such an equivalence. It is another instance of Mr. Davies's historical malfeasance.

For those who do not know or remember the bare facts, here are a few that show that however much the Poles suffered under the German occupation—and they suffered gravely—their situation was not comparable to that of the Jews. The Jews were a national minority of three million; the Poles the majority of over 30 million. The Jews, before they were murdered, were locked inside ghettos, deprived of their freedom of movement; the Poles were allowed a minimum of local self-government and mobility within their places of residence. The Jews were being systematically starved; the Poles were undernourished. The Jews were altogether denied medical care and medicines. The Jews had no military supplies; the underground Polish Home Army had considerable reserves of matériel. Finally, the Germans doomed the Poles to bondage and slavery; they condemned the Jews to annihilation.

Mr. Davies and his defender Mr. DeRosa mention the endorsements that Mr. Davies's work has received from the historical profession; Henry Fetter's letter bears them out. But that is because some specialists in Polish history share Mr. Davies's ignorance about the Jews and a few probably share his prejudices. That goes with the territory. But not all historians, even at Stanford (where, *pace* Mr. DeRosa, Mr. Davies was invited to apply for the chair which he was eventually denied), regard his work highly. Here is an excerpt from a letter of May 2, 1986, which Mr. Davies received from James Rosse, provost at Stanford, explaining how other historians feel about his work (Mr. Davies himself released this letter, together with one he

wrote, to the *Stanford Campus Report*, which published the correspondence on January 28, 1987):

A number of the faculty believed that *God's Playground* was insufficiently analytical and tends to substitute rhetoric and irony for clear historical analysis and explanation. . . . [T]he analysis of the event or issue was found by some members of the department to be either incoherent, contradictory, or superficial. . . . This view is also reflected in the letters of certain outside referees. For example, one writes, "[Davies] shows an inclination to sacrifice exactitude to a well-turned phrase or a sweeping generalization." . . . Another outside referee refers to "[Davies's] occasionally erratic judgments and generalizations, and the many factual errors which seem to be due to haste." . . .

A related criticism of the book was that the presentation of Polish history in the book was insufficiently critical, that it crossed the fine line that divides empathetic history from historical apology or partisanship. This complaint focused on the chapter of *God's Playground* on the Jews, which the critics found not merely insensitive but unacceptably defensive of the behavior of the Poles.

As for Mr. Davies's statements about "Zionist cells" and the existence of an alleged Jewish conspiracy against him, they have been reported to me by those who have heard him make these remarks. But I can quote him at first hand as well, from his letter to the provost on March 20, 1986 (also printed, as noted above, in the *Campus Report*):

. . . I trust that you will have been informed, as I was by several colleagues, that there were suspicions in the History Department of a "Jewish conspiracy," and that opponents may have met before the vote to coordinate their attack. Personally, *on present evidence*, I do not hold *entirely* to the supposition of a formal cabal. [Emphasis added]

3. *Re Polish-Jewish relations*: Any discussion of the attitudes of Poles toward Jews, especially during the lifetime of the Republic of Poland (1918-39) and during the German occupation, sets off waves of hatred. That is evident in some of these letters and in Mr. Davies's figmental description of me as "an ex-leftist, who is now the adherent

of an ultra-chauvinistic, right-wing faction among the broad streams of Zionism." Anyone who writes Jewish history from a Jewish perspective gets used to receiving anti-Semitic mail, but my short article elicited a larger than usual share of unpleasant anonymous telephone calls and poisonous anonymous letters. All this shows is how difficult it remains to discuss this subject rationally and substantively.

This is not the place to expatiate on Polish-Jewish relations or to present some of the abundant historical evidence about Polish anti-Semitism in the years since 1918. (Mr. Chotkowski's citations concerning Polish poverty have little bearing on the anti-Jewish economic policies which the Polish government put into effect in the late 1930's.) Here I want only to raise one point, not often mentioned, which—so I believe—underlies some of the passion this subject arouses.

Ever since the first three partitions of Poland at the end of the 18th century, there has been a tendency among Poles to see themselves as the Christ nation, whose sufferings will some day redeem Poland and the world. Even before World War I, in the times of the massive czarist pogroms, some Poles expressed resentment against the Jews for having preempted their role as the suffering Christ of nations and for refusing to acknowledge—as a Polish anti-Semite around the turn of the century put it—the Polish people's "historic mission of martyrdom." This may help us understand why Polish resentment intensified after the murder of the six million European Jews. Since then, some Poles have tried to (re)establish their exclusive right to national martyrdom. They have even tried to equate their wartime losses of three million Poles, about 10 percent of their population, with the murder of three million Polish Jews, some 90 percent of all Polish Jews. But happily for the Poles, the Polish people survived the war and have their country and nation, even if its political system is not to their liking. The Polish Jews, however, did not survive.

Watergate and After

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Leonard Garment in his article "The Guns of Watergate" [April]

seems to suggest that President Nixon made a mistake in not destroying the Oval Office tapes. If this is Mr. Garment's view, there is a disturbing immorality about it. Destruction would have involved more than "extremely cumbersome logistics." Someone would have had to give the order and then explain why. While presumably the conversations themselves might have been shielded by claims of executive privilege, what of the speculation and the effort to draw inferences about their contents from the act of destruction? I suggest that more than not being an "unreasonable decision at the time," it was the only decision open to the President of the United States.

It is interesting to speculate on the possibility that the absence of documentation supporting recent presidential decisions is one of the lessons learned from Watergate.

AVERN COHN

U.S. District Court
Detroit, Michigan

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

One need not agree with everything Leonard Garment writes to recognize that he is describing an important phenomenon. He calls it "prosecutorial politics" or "the criminalization of our public affairs." In addition to the problems that Mr. Garment foresees, this style of politics represents what I believe is nothing less than an attempt to change our form of government. Without benefit of national debate or a constitutional amendment, we are in effect gradually exchanging our federal system, with its three independent branches, for a kind of half-baked parliamentary system. Instead of the present system, which has served us well for over two centuries, we appear to be drifting unconsciously toward an unplanned and untried system in which each house of Congress, unable to effect the resignation of the President and his cabinet by a "no-confidence" vote, can nonetheless render them ineffectual by means of continual investigations, accusations, seizure of records, and threats of criminal prosecution. Even if the investigations ultimately produce little of note and if no criminal convictions result, the administration may be weakened almost as much as if major crimes had been uncovered.

The process more than the result is what causes the paralysis. . . .

Attempting to throw those with whom one disagrees out of office is one thing; threatening to throw them into prison is quite another.

DAVID C. STOLINSKY
Los Angeles, California

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Leonard Garment might have noted, in reflecting on the lessons of Watergate, that the klieg lights in congressional hearing rooms burn with special intensity when both houses of Congress are controlled by the party that does not also have control of the executive branch.

It is, I think, no coincidence that the Iran-*contra* issue became such a source of contention between Capitol Hill and the White House only after the Republicans lost control of the Senate. . . .

One can still hear reference on network television to Watergate's "Saturday night massacre." . . .

The easy acceptance of the term "massacre" to refer to the removal from office of three members of the executive branch on a Saturday in October 1973 reflects not merely political ideology, but a mindset powerful enough to distort language in its assault on the authority of an incumbent President. . . .

The challenge to an incumbent President from a hostile Congress is made easier when the powerful organs of our media, while seeming to adopt the "proper" adversarial role vis-à-vis the President, become megaphones for the members of Congress who hold in their hands the power to turn on those klieg lights. . . .

DAVID R. ZUKERMAN
Bronx, New York

LEONARD GARMENT writes:

Avern Cohn is confusing a retrospective analysis—which was my objective—with some kind of moral essay—which was not my objective. I did not say or suggest that the President made a mistake in not destroying the tapes; I said there were understandable tactical reasons why he did not destroy them. Whether a President is obliged to make and maintain a full documentary record for historians and criminal investigators is an interesting but different subject. Judge Cohn also overlooks my explicit discussion of the negative inferences that would be drawn from



School of American Ballet student performance: Merrill Ashley, Gelsey Kirkland and Colleen Neary. Copyright: Martha Swope, 1967.

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an act of destruction and that this played an important part in the President's decision not to destroy the tapes. The crucial fact, I noted, was that an official investigation was pending in which the Senate committee made clear its desire to obtain the tapes even before a formal subpoena was served. This made what would otherwise have been a legal and unobjectionable act into a potential obstruction of justice and by itself might have led to the early initiation of impeachment proceedings.

Judge Cohn's final comment is, in fact, one of my central propositions: that the pervasive prosecutorial atmosphere that has developed since Watergate has introduced an inevitable distortion into the executive branch record-making process. Fewer significant discussions take place at formal meetings, fewer writings are made, those which exist are frequently drained of detail and accuracy by fear of public disclosure, and many important discussions now take place in corridors, at parties, and in other informal places.

I was told by one of the highest ranking cabinet officers (at a private dinner) that when he testifies before a congressional committee, he is invariably made to feel like a criminal on trial and he conducts himself accordingly.

Cambodia

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I was very pleased to see that Arch Puddington noted the plight of the Cham people in "Pol Pot in Retrospect" [April]. The Cham name does not usually arise in the context of debates surrounding one of the most horrible periods in Cambodian history. Mr. Puddington's revelation that significant numbers of Chams fought back is accurate, although our efforts to fend off brutal assaults launched against our people took a terrible toll.

According to my estimate, 650,000 of the 800,000 Cambodian Muslims (Chams) were killed during the four-year reign of terror (1975-79). I myself am one of the 3,000 Chams who were brought to the United States for resettlement. Larger groups of Cham survivors were given permanent-resident status in France and West Germany. Approximately 3,000 Muslim Chams are currently living in the Site 2

refugee camp inside Thailand, under the nominal control of the Khmer People's National Liberation Front headed by former Prime Minister Son Sann.

One small point of contention, however: the Cham people did not, as Mr. Puddington asserts, support the Khmer Rouge voluntarily in the Cambodian civil war. Khmer Rouge agitation for creating a "free and just" society fell upon deaf ears. In Khmer Rouge-controlled zones, Cambodian Muslims were—under penalty of death for evasion—mobilized and drafted into guerrilla units.

HASSAN ABUKASEM
President, Nationalist Chams
Organization
Washington, D.C.

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Although Arch Puddington is undoubtedly correct in hailing Elizabeth Becker's *When the War Was Over* as "an extremely valuable history of postwar Cambodia," Mr. Puddington might have remarked upon a significant element of disingenuousness in Miss Becker's treatment of the closely supervised tour she took of Pol Pot's Cambodia in December 1978 with Richard Dudman and Malcolm Caldwell. According to chapter eleven of *When the War Was Over*, Miss Becker and Dudman remained singularly unimpressed by the putatively thriving agricultural communes, the ubiquitous irrigation projects, the small-scale industrial enterprises, and the well-fed peasants that their hosts contrived for them to see. Miss Becker recalls feeling certain "that what was being presented to us as reality was so obviously fake," and that the cooperatives they saw amounted to "a true Potemkin village." . . .

To be sure, Miss Becker's articles on her tour of Democratic Kampuchea, which appeared in the *Washington Post* during the last six days of 1978, cannot be characterized, on the whole, as even slightly sympathetic to the Pol Pot regime. . . . But her view of the Khmer Rouge economic program was another matter. . . . She came away with "the lasting impression" that rural life in Democratic Kampuchea "was a tableau of scores of peasants, clad in black, tending abundant rice fields," the abundance of which was due largely to the construction of massive irrigation projects. . . . However much

she might have despised the new order, Miss Becker did not reject the evidence marshaled by her hosts in their effort to convince her that the regime had at least succeeded in meeting the *material* needs of the Cambodian people:

From all I had heard before my trip about how poorly the new system in Cambodia was working, I was a bit surprised by the general level of production throughout the country. . . .

The methods that the new rulers of Cambodia have used to get their system working are an entirely separate matter that will continue to be discussed—and condemned—by much of the world for years to come. But the economic system, I am forced to conclude, seems to be working.

Yet Miss Becker's account seems like the work of a hardened skeptic compared to that of her colleague and traveling companion, Richard Dudman, about whose background Miss Becker offers insufficient information, . . . although acknowledging that . . . he "had written sympathetically of the developing Communist movement. . . ." In fact, *Forty Days With the Enemy*, Dudman's book detailing the time he spent in the spring of 1970 as a prisoner of Vietnamese and Cambodian Communist guerrillas in Cambodia, is a work dominated by the author's soppy veneration of his Communist captors.

In *Forty Days*, Dudman apprises the reader that, in his capacity as Washington bureau chief of the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, he "had been going to Southeast Asia every year since 1960 to keep track of the deepening American intervention there, which I soon came to consider something very close to imperialism." So it does not come as a surprise to learn that Dudman and the two antiwar journalists who shared his captivity came away with "a very positive impression of the Liberation Army." . . . He even avers that . . . the Khmer Rouge guerrillas really are the proverbial Boy Scouts:

We had come to know the guerrillas pretty well by this time. . . . It might sound corny, but they seemed to have all the virtues that are valued in Western society. I recalled the titles of the Boy Scout laws that I had memorized as a boy: A Scout is Trustworthy, Loyal, Helpful, Friendly, Courteous, Kind, Obedient, Cheerful, Thrifty, Brave, Clean and Rever-

ent. They all fitted the guerrillas perfectly. . . .

Forty Days was not dismissed as the product of a gullible romanticizer of leftist liberation movements. Anthony Lewis of the *New York Times* hailed Dudman's "eloquent account" as the work of "a notably level-headed man, with no sentimental illusions about Communist regimes." . . . In 1972 *Forty Days* won the award for Asian reporting of the Overseas Press Club, and Dudman's book has since been often cited by writers out to prove that the Khmer Rouge were not innately vicious. . . .

Dudman's own report on the two-week Potemkin tour of Democratic Kampuchea (an edited version of which appeared in the January 15, 1979 edition of the *Post-Dispatch*) which he took with Miss Becker proved a worthy successor to his previous work. . . . On the one hand, Dudman conceded that "the new Cambodian version of Communism had no place in it for anyone who wanted to read, write, or think independently, or for anyone who wanted to own more than a bare minimum of property." But he also insisted that "at the same time, the physical condition of life may well have improved for many peasants and former urban workers—possibly for the vast majority of the population."

Cambodia was "in the midst of one of the world's great housing programs," which was effecting "a sudden mass upgrading of the individual family homes from the standard that has existed for centuries," and which "probably meant better living, too, for the hundreds of thousands of country people who were driven into the cities by the

five-year war and who had suffered wartime crowding and poverty."

Dudman could tell that the refugee stories of malnutrition and starvation could not be true, or at least not representative, because in the course of his tour, "under strict government supervision but with good opportunity for observation," he encountered "the common sight of playful small children, . . . with none of the listlessness or protruding bellies that bespeak starvation or malnutrition." This was no wonder, given Dudman's glowing description of "the vast ricelands, often stretching to the horizon, and the dikes and canals dividing the bright green flooded paddies of young seedlings and the golden fields ready for harvest." . . .

Nor could one find in Dudman's account any sign of the quotidian terror and labor-camp regimentation that had in fact never abated. He "did not find the grim picture painted by the thousands of refugees who could not take the new order." . . . During their eight-hour workday "the workers usually appeared to be working under their own direction," without any "sign of government cadres giving orders or armed guards enforcing the working hours."

Once again, Dudman's egregious credulity did nothing to discredit him. Senator Thomas Eagleton inserted this "excellent series of articles, providing a unique glimpse of life in Cambodia," into the *Congressional Record* (January 18, 1979) and Dudman was chosen by the *New York Times Book Review* to review William Shawcross's *Sideshow*. As might be expected, Dudman concurred with Shawcross in holding the United States criminally liable for the wartime and

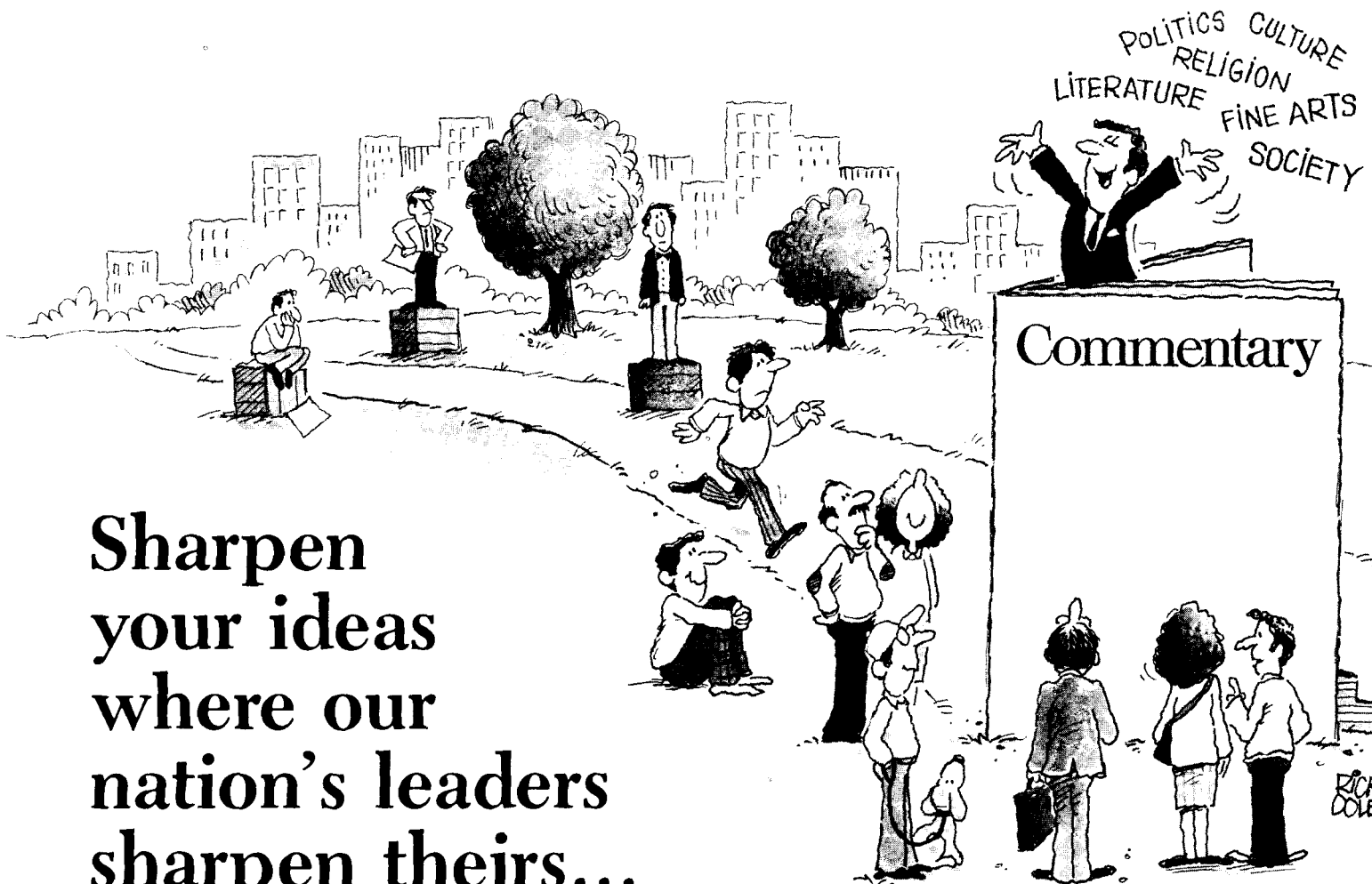
postwar sufferings of the Khmer people. He took issue only with what he regarded as Shawcross's insufficiently critical treatment of the refugee stories detailing the Cambodian holocaust. . . .

Dudman has since retired, but his high standing as a journalist appears to have been enhanced rather than diminished by his dogged defense of what may have been the most brutal and rigidly totalitarian revolutionary movement the world has ever known.

Of course, the practical importance of the articles that Miss Becker and Dudman wrote on the economic life of Democratic Kampuchea should not be exaggerated. That the Pol Pot regime was able to portray itself as an economic success to two American reporters had little material consequence. What they wrote did not prolong the life of that regime by so much as a single day and, outside the ideologically rigid circles of Noam Chomsky, it had no effect in altering Western opinion of the late regime of Democratic Kampuchea. (What Miss Becker and Dudman wrote before 1975 is another matter.) Their work does, however, provide a striking and instructive illustration of the susceptibility of representatives of prestigious mainstream newspapers to what Paul Hollander has called the techniques of hospitality. . . .

Elizabeth Becker would have written an even better book had she admitted to being in some measure deceived by her hosts in December 1978, and had she told her readers something more about her companion, Richard Dudman. . . .

DAVID ROBERTS, JR.
Houston, Texas



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The Importance of Sidney Hook

Hilton Kramer

OF THE writers who belonged to the original "family" of the now much-chronicled New York intellectuals, Sidney Hook has been in several important respects the most unusual. In a circle of writers who prided themselves on their insiders' knowledge of Marxism—and for whom, indeed, Marxism was long held to be the central issue of the day—Hook was the only one who was a recognized authority on the subject. Whereas the others were all, in varying degrees, amateurs of the Marxian dialectic—brilliant amateurs in some cases, but amateurs nonetheless—it was Hook alone who early on established his reputation as a professional scholar in this field and wrote the books—*Towards the Understanding of Karl Marx* (1933) and *From Hegel to Marx* (1936)—that helped to shape the agenda of intellectual debate. He came to the subject, moreover, not only out of a partisan political interest—this was true of all the New York intellectuals—but as a trained philosopher who brought an intimate knowledge of Marx's writings and their philosophical sources to bear on the incessant factional disputes and divisive ideological claims and counter-claims that have loomed so large in the intellectual life of his time.

In the early 30's, when Hook was vigorously espousing Marxist causes, the authority he brought to the subject made him a formidable and influential figure—admired by radical intellectuals as much for his courage as for his perspicacity. He was said to be the only avowed Marxist to serve on the faculty of a major American university—he had already begun his long association with the department of philosophy at New York University—and in this period, no less an eminence than Earl Browder, then head of the American Communist party, had invited him to set up a Communist spy apparatus. This was distinction indeed! Browder had called on the wrong man, however. Even as a Marxist, Hook showed a disturbing tendency—some would say a compulsion—to act as an independent thinker. Although an inveterate joiner of boards and committees who was always ready to enlist in a cause he be-

lieved in, Hook was politically unclubbable. And this tendency to independence, which in the course of the 30's brought him into fierce and open conflict with the Communists and their sympathizers, soon made him a figure of another sort—a despised renegade, and at times a pariah, who became for many liberals and radicals an unquestioned symbol of political perfidy and whose example, for that very reason, even some of his faint-hearted intellectual associates and admirers feared to emulate too conspicuously lest they, too, be consigned to the outer darkness. In this role, as well, Hook has often been unusual, if only for the intensity of the abuse he has been made to suffer for his frankly stated and scrupulously argued beliefs.

It is not exclusively to the world of the intellectuals, however, that Hook has directed his voluminous writings and his many-sided political activities. He has also been unusual among his confreres in the New York intellectual world for electing to play a public role. The determination and tenacity which Hook has brought to the task of initiating and pursuing public debate over a whole range of political questions, with himself often occupying an unpopular position, has long been one of the salient characteristics of his career. While for the most part it remained the practice of the New York intellectuals to conduct an intramural, highly factional debate about such political questions—at least until the 1960's, when the *New York Review of Books* and the *New Yorker* provided some of them with the means and the opportunity to reach out to a larger readership—Hook habitually adopted a more public role in his campaigns to distinguish historical truth from political falsehood. From the time of his break with the Communist party, which occurred in 1933-34 in the immediate aftermath of Hitler's coming to power—an event in which he clearly perceived the role of Stalin and his policy of the-worse-the-better—Hook seems to have understood the importance of acting as an embattled citizen of the democracy with which, as an independent radical, he still had many quarrels, to be sure, but which he nonetheless embraced as a cause to be energetically defended. It was (and is) this civic dimension to the many tasks he set himself that so often placed Hook at

HILTON KRAMER is the editor of the *New Criterion*. His most recent book is *The Revenge of the Philistines*.

odds with his fellow intellectuals, who, in their attachment to the ethos—if not always to the specific political doctrines—of the Marxist legacy, so frequently refused to identify their interests with the survival of bourgeois democracy. Oddly enough, Hook still calls himself a “socialist”—a matter to be discussed—but it is unmistakably as a champion of bourgeois democracy that he has long been locked in public combat with the true believers in socialism.

THOUGH often accused of being a zealot and a die-hard, especially in his opposition to Communism and its liberal apologists, Hook has actually been a good deal more forthright and reasonable about the shifts he has made in his political outlook over the years than many of his accusers have been about their own. Hook’s shifts, moreover, have never been tethered to the winds of fashion—he has never had a taste for what was chic—nor have they been tailored either to serve the interests of a political party (or a political candidate) or to win for Hook himself an appointment to political office. Agree with them or not, Hook’s views and the arguments given to support them have been reasoned and informed responses to the central political events of this century, and much of the time they have resulted in highly unpopular opinions. As he remarks in the closing pages of *Out of Step*, the long and aptly titled volume of memoirs he has now published*:

Almost always I found myself in a minority. . . . I have always been somewhat premature in relation to dominant currents of public opinion. I was prematurely antiwar in 1917-21, prematurely anti-fascist, prematurely a Communist fellow-traveler, prematurely an anti-Communist, prematurely, in radical circles, a supporter of the war against Hitler, prematurely a cold warrior against Stalin’s effort to extend the Gulag Archipelago, prematurely against the policy of détente and appeasement, prematurely for a national civil-rights program and against all forms of invidious discrimination, including reverse discrimination.

The book that Hook has given us in *Out of Step* is, in effect, the political chronicle of an American intellectual dissident, and it has the great virtue of reminding us, again and again and again, that Communism has been the principal cause of the author’s dissent from received intellectual opinion because Communism and the illusions it has generated have played so important and so disheartening a role in the intellectual life of our time. Communism is not, to be sure, the only subject discussed in this book—far from it—nor is it the only subject on which Hook has taken a critical position, but it is certainly the main one. For this reason, *Out of Step* is not a book to be recommended to those who are easily wearied by lengthy accounts of the polemical battles that intellectuals

have waged with one another on the issue of Communism and the nature of Soviet power. Since he has devoted so much of his long life to opposing the views of those who either defended the Communist cause because they wished to see it triumph or mistakenly discounted the threat it posed to the survival of freedom and democracy because they failed to grasp the true dimension of that threat, this chronicle of Hook’s intellectual career inevitably places a greater emphasis on this issue than on any other. I think it is proper that it does so, and the result is a book that must be counted as a major contribution to the literature of anti-Communism—the most important contribution by an American writer, I think, since Whittaker Chambers’s *Witness*. It is not a book without serious flaws—some of which will be noted here—but it is nonetheless essential reading for anyone who aspires to an understanding of the place that Communism and the opposition to Communism have occupied in American intellectual life.

THE historical scope of Hook’s chronicle is a broad one, reaching from the period of World War I to that of the Reagan administration, and its cast of characters includes, among many other distinctive figures in the intellectual and political world of his time, John Dewey, Bertrand Russell, Bertolt Brecht, Albert Einstein, Arthur Koestler, Whittaker Chambers, Morris Raphael Cohen, Max Eastman, Norman Thomas, V. F. Calverton, Malcolm Cowley, James Burnham, Edmund Wilson, and the writers of the *Partisan Review* circle. About some of these figures—Dewey, Russell, Einstein, and Cohen—he writes at length, while others—Cowley, for example, who is depicted solely for his work as an outstanding literary apologist for the Moscow Purge Trials—are given little more than walk-on roles. Some are discussed with an impressive spirit of generosity—Dwight Macdonald, for example, with whom Hook fought some crucial political battles in the 40’s and 50’s—while in other cases—Philip Rahv’s, most particularly—old scores are settled with an all too evident rancor. (Hook is no doubt correct in his assessment of Rahv’s character, but he is dead wrong about Rahv’s literary and intellectual gifts.)

Not surprisingly in a book of this sort, Hook has also availed himself of an opportunity to respond to the many false and unfair charges that have been brought against him in other writers’ memoirs—Alfred Kazin’s and Irving Howe’s, among others—and in these passages we are given a glimpse of the various ways in which even such renowned literary figures have, like so many lesser mortals, often edited their memories to suit the needs of the day. If at times there is a certain bitterness in Hook’s devastating attacks on his critics,

* Harper & Row, 628 pp., \$29.95.

there is also a certain humor—and it isn't Hook, in most cases, who has initiated the controversy. Again and again, his positions have been misrepresented and his motives maligned, and it was not to be expected that he would endure such treatment with a saintly indifference. In all of this "gossip," there are important issues at stake, and Hook has naturally been concerned to set the record straight as well as to defend his own honor. I think he has succeeded in doing both.

Out of Step is not a book primarily concerned with personalities, however. It is a book about history, and it is in its account of certain key episodes that Hook's memoirs are likely to have a permanent historical interest. The most important of these episodes are recounted in the chapters that Hook devotes to the Dewey Commission of Inquiry, which was organized by John Dewey, Hook, and others in the 30's to investigate the truth about the Moscow Trials; the Cultural and Scientific Conference for World Peace, which took place at the Waldorf-Astoria in New York in 1949 and was a Cominform effort to enlist American intellectuals in the defense of Soviet foreign policy; the activities of the American Committee for Cultural Freedom and the Congress for Cultural Freedom in the 50's, and the reasons for their demise; and the collapse of his own university in the late 60's (described in painful detail in the chapter called "*Walpurgisnacht* at New York University: The Academic Ethic in Abeyance").

In the events recounted in these chapters, though spread out over a period of thirty-odd years and involving many different figures, the essential historical drama is the same: American intellectuals, representing the political conscience of the Western democracies, found themselves challenged by a widespread and well-organized campaign to falsify the political record and the political goals of the Soviet Union and other Communist regimes for the purpose of advancing the interests of those regimes. In the ways in which our intellectuals responded, or failed to respond, to these historic challenges, much of the political history—and, alas, the moral history—of American intellectual life since the 30's was written. It is a mark of Hook's distinction that he was deeply involved in all of these events, and always on the right side, upholding a standard of truth and a commitment to democracy in the face of Communist mendacity and the support it so often received from fellow-traveling liberals.

The chapters that Hook devotes to the American Committee for Cultural Freedom and the Congress for Cultural Freedom make particularly interesting reading in the light of the many slanders which have been hurled at those organizations, often by writers who did not hesitate to benefit from them when they were in their heyday. Hook staunchly defends the morality of the now-famous CIA subsidy to the Congress, but freely acknowledges that it was nonetheless a po-

litical blunder of considerable magnitude to have accepted the subsidy. At the same time, he recalls for his readers the political atmosphere in which the work of the Congress was undertaken:

We were already *in fact*, if not *de jure*, engaged in a defensive war with Communism—the war was actually raging in Korea—and our fears [were] that its flames would spread and engulf Western Europe. We were in daily contact with a stream of refugee intellectuals, whose harrowing tales of persecution not only moved us deeply but gave us a sense of guilt. . . . Our conviction that in all likelihood we would soon be involved in a European war, triggered by the advance of the Red Army or an attempt by the Communist party in France or Italy to take power, accounted for the stilling of uneasiness about our funding.

If it was permissible to help keep free trade unions from being overwhelmed by the Communist trade unions with access to the unlimited resources of the Kremlin, if it was permissible to aid democratic political parties in Western Europe to carry on a political struggle in opposition to the Communist parties funded by the Soviet Union, certainly a case could be made for the legitimacy of aid to those who were attempting to keep the alternative of a free culture open to the intellectuals and opinion-makers in the same areas.

Beyond this, Hook offers his readers a list of twenty actions taken by the Congress between 1951 and 1956 that will no doubt come as a surprise to those whose mental picture of the Congress's political agenda has been derived from the writings of Christopher Lasch and other left-wing critics. Beginning with 1951, the first item on the list is the following: "Protested against the execution of 17 Negroes in Martinsville, Va., and the local system which punished men differently according to their color for the same crime." For 1952: "Protested the admission of Spain in UNESCO." For 1953: "Protested to the Peron government [of Argentina] against the arrest of Victorio [*sic*] Ocampo and Francisco Romero." For 1954: "The American Committee produced a book entitled *McCarthy and the Communists*, exposing the nature of McCarthyism." And so on. The history of the Congress for Cultural Freedom remains to be written, but until it is, Hook has given us the best account of it that we have.

IN READING *Out of Step*, the question that inevitably arises about its account of Communism is: does Hook exaggerate the extent of its influence in American life? The charge has often been made that he does, and it was made again, most recently, by Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., in his review of *Out of Step* in the *New Republic* (May 4, 1987):

Looking back, Hook considerably exaggerates the power of American Communists—an overestimate that, ironically, he shares with the

young historians of the New Left. He speaks of Communist influence in the 1930's as "so strong that it amounted to domination of key areas of American cultural life, in literature, art, and movies." The Communist popular-front organizations, he writes, "dominated the cultural, literary, and in part the academic landscape." And again: "The climate of opinion in American liberal and literary circles with respect to the [Moscow] Trials, until the Nazi-Soviet pact of August 1939, remained overwhelmingly favorable to the Soviet Union." *All this gives the Communists far too much credit.* [Emphasis added]

Schlesinger concludes by dismissing Hook as one of those people—obviously to be pitied—who "are transfixed by the Communist issue for all their lives."

This, I think it is fair to say, is now the received opinion about Sidney Hook among those liberal intellectuals who, though they may once have served—and served with distinction—in the anti-Communist ranks, no longer wish to be identified as "cold-war liberals," and do everything in their power to shed the anti-Communist label. Liberals of this persuasion—born-again liberals, as I tend to think of them—are not to be confused with the kind of doctrinaire leftists who emerged in the 60's as the unashamed champions of Marxist ideology. Born-again liberals tend to be older and to know more about Communism than the 60's types, and they wouldn't dream of baldly defending the aspirations of Marxist-Leninist regimes. All the same, they have been profoundly affected by the anti-anti-Communist and anti-American attitudes of the 60's and by the wave of historical revisionism—especially as it had been applied to the history of the cold war—that these attitudes brought in their wake.

This, too, is a subject that awaits its historian. The subject is certainly a fascinating one, full of dramatic reversals and personal disavowals, and its dramatis personae are a rather distinguished, even a glamorous lot. George F. Kennan, Mary McCarthy, and Theodore Draper must be counted among the group's intellectual superstars, and so, also, must Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr. Each has exorcised his anti-Communist identity at a time and place of his own choosing: Kennan upon returning to America from his diplomatic duties abroad; Miss McCarthy on arriving in Hanoi, where she discovered that the real enemy in the Vietnam war wasn't Communism but the United States; Draper—well, that is a tale too long to be told here. Schlesinger seems to have undergone the requisite rite somewhere in the vicinity of Hyanis, around the time that Robert Kennedy was making his ill-fated bid for the Presidency. Moving to the Left in the heady days of the antiwar movement, Schlesinger has been more effective than any of the others in transforming himself from the very archetype of a cold-war liberal into the newer, more stylish, born-again model. His

categorical censure of Hook on the issue of Communism and its influence is therefore worth some attention, for it clearly defines the great shift that has occurred in liberal thinking about the Communist issue over the last two decades.

IN HIS review of *Out of Step* in the *New Republic*, Schlesinger acknowledges that he "was at Hook's side in some of those battles [against Stalinist influence] after the war, and I rejoiced with him as he struck down the infidel." He is speaking of the late 40's, but he never quite explains why he thought it important to join Hook in this political battle, for he now describes the power of the American Communists after the war as consisting of little more than "a mild influence in the labor movement and the intellectual community." This is not exactly the position that Schlesinger upheld at the time, however.

In 1949, a decade *after* the Nazi-Soviet pact, the issue of Communist influence was still sufficiently compelling in his eyes for Schlesinger to devote an entire chapter to "The Communist Challenge to America" in *The Vital Center*—a book designed, in significant part, to the task of winning American liberals away from the influence of the Communist movement. A year earlier the Communist party had succeeded in taking over a candidate—Henry Wallace—for the American Presidency. In the very year that *The Vital Center* was published, the Cominform mounted the Waldorf conference, enlisting the services of prominent American scientists, writers, and academics on behalf of the Soviet Union. The two leading liberal weeklies, the *Nation* and the *New Republic*, were still following the Stalinist line on most political matters, and one of them, the *New Republic*, was still owned and operated by a man who, as he subsequently acknowledged, had earlier been recruited by Anthony Blunt to serve as a Comintern agent.* In 1947, Alger Hiss was still a high official in the U.S. State Department, and then, until his resignation in 1949, president of the prestigious Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. Somehow the word "mild" does not suffice to describe the phenomenon Schlesinger is alluding to.

There is, moreover, another interesting connection between *The Vital Center* and Schlesinger's

* I refer, of course, to Michael Straight. In a new book on the Blunt affair—*Conspiracy of Silence: The Secret Life of Anthony Blunt* by Barrie Penrose and Simon Freeman (Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 616 pp., \$22.95)—we are reminded that it was to Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., then a member of President Kennedy's White House staff, that Straight confessed his involvement with the Soviet espionage apparatus. Kennedy had offered Straight the chairmanship of a new agency, the Advisory Council on the Arts, and Straight knew what would happen when the routine check by the FBI was carried out. Schlesinger then arranged for Straight to tell his story to the FBI, and it was Straight's confession that led to the unmasking of Blunt as a Soviet agent.

review of *Out of Step*. In his attack on American radicalism in *The Vital Center*, Schlesinger invoked the character of Hollingsworth, the utopian reformer in Hawthorne's *The Blithedale Romance*, as an example of the kind of totalitarian mind that liberalism should resist. He even attacked the literary historian Vernon L. Parrington for his sarcastic dismissal of Hawthorne—no doubt in this matter reflecting the influence of Lionel Trilling, who in 1940 had published the first version of the classic critique of Parrington that was to receive a wider readership when it became part of the essay called "Reality in America" in *The Liberal Imagination* (1950).^{*} "Parrington evidently thought that in Hollingsworth," Schlesinger wrote, "Hawthorne was portraying a George Norris or a Bob LaFollette. We know today that he was portraying a Zhdanov." Schlesinger went on:

And if . . . the Parringtons were caught off guard, if nothing in their system prepared them for totalitarianism, how much more unprepared were the readers of the liberal weeklies, the great thinkers who sought to combat Nazism by peace strikes, the Oxford oath, and disarmament, the ever hopeful who saw in Soviet Communism merely the lengthened shadow of Brook Farm! . . . This was in a real sense a *trahison des clercs*.

It is bracing to recall what a good writer Arthur Schlesinger once was about these matters, but it tells us something important about the character of born-again liberalism to see what use he makes of Hawthorne's Hollingsworth in his review of *Out of Step*. For it is no longer a Zhdanov that Hollingsworth calls to mind for Schlesinger, but—Sidney Hook! It is in this facile and unconscionable equation of anti-Communism with Communism itself that the true face of born-again liberalism is to be seen. A writer who has devoted much of his life to opposing Communist influence in the name of freedom and democracy is placed on a par with a representative of the Stalinist terror. And Schlesinger wonders why Hook is at times so bitter about his intellectual contemporaries!

THE truth is, it is the born-again Arthur Schlesinger, not Sidney Hook, who is guilty of distorting the issue of Communist influence, and the method he employs in doing so is all the more ignoble in being the work of a renowned historian who can be expected to know something about historical evidence. When Hook writes that "The climate of opinion in American liberal and literary circles with respect to the [Moscow] Trials, until the Nazi-Soviet pact of August 1939, remained overwhelmingly favorable to the Soviet Union," is he right or wrong? Schlesinger does not actually say. He simply declares that "too much credit" is given the Communists. But, it must be asked, how much is "too much"?

The Moscow correspondent of the liberal *New York Times* in the 30's wrote approvingly of the Trials, as Schlesinger well knows, and the American ambassador whom the liberal Franklin Roosevelt installed in Moscow was likewise disposed toward them. (Hollywood even produced a popular movie celebrating the fact.) On the literary scene, Hook cites the case of Malcolm Cowley—the literary editor of the *New Republic*, then one of the leading organs of fellow-traveling liberal opinion, who wrote repeatedly in defense of the Trials, even going to the trouble of favorably "reviewing" the published transcripts, and not as fiction, either. Is all this ancient history that can now be forgotten, even by renowned historians? Well, not exactly. For it was not until 1984, nearly fifty years after the Trials, that Cowley finally got around to acknowledging his shameful role in this affair—and even then, though admitting that his writings on this subject "did have some effect on American liberals as a result of the reputation I had earned for being moderate," he rather grandly exonerated himself from any harmful influence. He then went on, in characteristic Stalinist style, to denounce the "Trotskyists" (meaning, I suppose, the writers who pilloried him in *Partisan Review*) as "imperialists themselves [who] tried to lead a struggle against Communism in any form, in any country, with Senator McCarthy as their embarrassing ally."[†] Even now, half a century later, it is only in Sidney Hook's chronicle that we are given a truthful account of this episode.

There is a great deal more to be said about the distortions to be found in Schlesinger's review of *Out of Step*, but I will cite only a single further example of his curious way of dealing, or not dealing, with Hook's criticisms of his contemporaries. For Schlesinger, Hook is clearly guilty of an act of *lèse-majesté* in writing harshly about intellectuals, especially born-again liberals, if they have achieved literary celebrity. Thus, he quotes a remark about Mary McCarthy—"an almost infinite capacity for self-deception"—as an example of what he calls Hook's "resentment," but says nothing about Miss McCarthy's own political writings, which are the basis of Hook's judgment. But how is one to account for the pernicious inanities that Mary McCarthy has written on some of the gravest political issues of our time? Her attack on Orwell in *The Writing on the Wall* is easily explained, for she clearly understood how loathsome Orwell would have found her apologia for the Communist regime in North Vietnam. "I can hear

^{*} See "Parrington, Mr. Smith, and Reality," in *Partisan Review*, January-February 1940. It is interesting, in the present context, to consider Sidney Hook's role in Lionel Trilling's intellectual development. According to Mark Krupnick, in his recent book, *Lionel Trilling and the Fate of Cultural Criticism*, "All through the 30's [Hook] had been the single greatest influence on Trilling's political attitudes."

[†] See "Echoes of Moscow: 1937-1938" by Malcolm Cowley, in the *Southern Review*, Spring 1984.

[Orwell] angrily arguing," she wrote, "that to oppose the Americans in Vietnam, whatever their shortcomings, is to be 'objectively' pro-totalitarian." Orwell might indeed have so argued, and would he have been wrong to do so? How *can* one explain her gushing praise for that totalitarian regime except by reference to her capacity for self-deception? Open any page of Mary McCarthy's *Hanoi*, and you find something like this:

No cultural revolution would be thinkable here, since culture—the accretion of the past—is the guarantor of Vietnamese independence. The delicate position of Pham Van Dong's government is that it is bent on preserving Vietnamese traditions but it is also bent on preserving the sacred tradition of socialism, i.e., watchful central planning. On the one hand, it proceeds with an almost tactile sense (*cf.* Dr. Tung's surgical fingers) of what its people—and their history—will accept or reject. On the other, it insists on what is "good" for them; this is a moral, ascetic government, concerned above all with the *quality* of Vietnamese life.

One weeps to think that these are the words of a writer now held up to us as an exemplary literary figure—"Our Woman of Letters," as Michiko Kakutani recently called her in an article of that title in the *New York Times Magazine*, an article in which (needless to say?) no reference is made to *Hanoi*. A writer of conscience—a Camus, say, or a Silone, not to mention Orwell himself—might have felt obliged to return to the subject of Vietnam in the light of the catastrophe that overtook the country in the wake of the American withdrawal, but Mary McCarthy has never been that kind of writer.

Whereas Hook candidly addresses such matters in *Out of Step*—matters that occupy as large a place in American intellectual life today as they have done in the past—Schlesinger merely side-steps them by fatuously announcing that "there are indeed more things in heaven and earth than are dreamed of in the anti-Communist philosophy."

THERE is an irony to be noted about this line of attack on Hook, for it attempts to discredit him precisely where he is least vulnerable—in the history he has given us of the political attitudes and the political actions of the American intellectual Left in its relation to the Communist movement—and it leaves unaddressed what may very well be the weakest and least persuasive aspects of the positions he has espoused. I have already observed that Hook made his first reputation as an authority on Marxism, and it is as a writer on Marxism and its influence on American intellectual life that he has made his most important contribution to American thought. But at the same time, he has also been the vocal exponent of another philosophical tradition: that of John Dewey. In both Marx and Dewey he obvi-

ously found a sympathetic confirmation of his own disposition toward a completely rationalist, instrumentalist, and materialist approach to life.

It was the emphasis that Dewey placed on the practical application of ideas—his insistence that every philosophical issue be tested in the crucible of experience, and his correlative belief that philosophical issues cannot really be said to exist if they have no immediate application to experience—that exerted an immense appeal for Hook. At a single stroke, all the mysteries of mind and spirit that had occupied Western philosophy from Plato onward were effectively set aside, and what Hook describes as "unbridgeable dualisms or supernaturalisms" were no longer to be considered legitimate objects of thought. "What excited me more than anything else," Hook writes, "was Dewey's revolutionary approach to philosophy that undercut all the assumptions of the classical tradition in philosophy." Henceforth, thinking was to be regarded as "a form of behavior," as a guide to "action in problematic situations." For all practical purposes—and there could be no other—metaphysical reflection was rendered obsolete.

In Hook's case, this species of pragmatism—so firmly anchored in the realm of verification, and so inimical to the idea of transcendence—served as a bulwark against whatever metaphysical or idealist tendencies were to be found in the Marxian philosophy. It is my impression, anyway, that Marxism was never for Hook a surrogate eschatology, but, on the contrary, that under Dewey's influence it became more and more a variety of political pragmatism, and when it failed to meet the requisite tests of verification, he showed himself ready to acknowledge its default and consider the alternatives. In this respect, at least, Dewey can be said to have served as a salutary influence on his political as well as his philosophical development.

The price of that influence came high, however, for Dewey's is a spiritually arid philosophy. It leaves the soul (as I believe it must be called) defenseless and virtually mute in the face of extreme experience. For the poetry of life it has no way of accounting, and for dealing with the tragedies of history—not to mention the tragic dimension of human experience—its problem-solving mentality has proved to be a feeble instrument. There is a touching moment in Hook's chronicle when he speaks of his discovering the novels of Dostoevsky in his freshman year at City College. "For years I nourished the hopes of writing a book on Dostoevsky . . . on the sweep and significance of his ideas," he writes. And then he adds, surprisingly: "Despite my absorption with political and social affairs, I still believe that the questions of God, freedom, and immortality are the most important of all questions that human beings can face." From an avowed rationalist and atheist, this is an extraordinary admission, but we hear little more

about it in the course of this long chronicle. Those were not, for the most part, the kind of questions that were given priority on Dewey's philosophical agenda, and it was to Dewey, not to Dostoevsky, that Hook gave his intellectual allegiance.

As a result, Hook's mind has long been closed to the whole religious dimension of human affairs—even, it must be said, to the religious dimension of the political questions which he has so often addressed. In writing about a figure like Whittaker Chambers, for example, his sympathy for and understanding of Chambers's ordeal—which are considerable—grind to a halt when it comes to the religious question. He cannot quite forgive Chambers for the religious crisis he suffered, for such crises are not susceptible to the tests of verification. And this means, among much else, that Hook cannot really fathom the extent to which the appeals of Communism—as well as other totalitarian creeds—have so often in this century been religious in nature.

THIS does not mean, however, that Hook himself has always remained immune to the seductions of faith. Far from it. As resistant as he is to the idea of transcendence, he has nonetheless continued to cherish his own notion of the sacred, which he insists on calling "socialism." Few writers in this century have done more than Sidney Hook to discredit the claims that have been advanced in the name of the socialist ideal, and he knows better than most what horrors have been committed in its name. Yet his devotion to that phantom ideal remains an article of faith—a poignant reminder that even the most determined rationalism is not always impervious to a certain kind of mystification.

Religion is not the only realm of the spirit, moreover, that Hook has turned a blind eye to. In the arts he has been similarly disinclined to find anything of great human consequence, and in the relations that have obtained between aesthetics and politics in this century—a century in which so many writers and artists have suffered political exile or imprisonment or even death as a result of their artistic pursuits—he does not seem to have taken even a perfunctory interest. In the chapter that Hook devotes to the Congress for Cultural Freedom, he mocks the idea that the high cultural achievements of the West might actually have an important role to play in serving the interests of political freedom. He gives us a detailed account of the dazzling festival of the arts which the Congress sponsored in Paris in 1952 under the direction of Nicolas Nabokov, but only in order to register his disapproval of the entire project. "The whole premise of the undertaking was oversimplified, if not false," Hook writes. "Since art has flourished even under political tyrannies, there was nothing the festival presented that could not have been offered to the world

under the aegis of an enlightened despotism." This statement is not only untrue but is so obtuse in so many ways that it could only have been written by a man for whom the life of art has never really existed either as a personal interest or as a cultural datum. As if, in any case, the problems that the Congress for Cultural Freedom had been created to deal with had anything to do, at that moment in history, with *enlightened* despotisms. This was still the age of Stalin, who—as Hook must surely know—took more than a passing interest in such matters. As did every Communist party in the world. On this question, Louis Aragon and Bertolt Brecht and Hanns Eisler are better guides than Sidney Hook.

Something like the same cultural philistinism is also to be regretted in the chapter that Hook devotes to his old associates on *Partisan Review*. In this case, of course, the provocation has been extreme, for Hook did play an important role in the political history of the magazine and there is something shameful in the way its editors have in recent years attempted to eliminate all trace of his connection with it. (Not that he is the only one to have suffered this treatment—but that is another story.) All the same, Hook's condescending and dismissive account of his former colleagues does him no credit, and can only leave the reader wondering why, if they really were such a bunch of ignorant dolts and untalented knaves, he ever bothered to get involved with them in the first place. Hook seems not to understand how much of his own reputation as a writer derives from his association with *Partisan Review* when the magazine was in its intellectual prime. Surely my own case is not untypical: it was in the pages of *Partisan Review* that I first read Hook in the 40's, and what I read there prompted me to look up his earlier books. No matter what the provocation, nothing is to be gained and much is to be lost by attempting to repeal that history today.

THERE is, then, no lack of flaws and failures to be found in *Out of Step* and in the ideas of its author. But on the central question at issue in this book—about the response of the American intellectual community to Communism in general and to Soviet power in particular, from the 1930's to the present day—Hook is not only consistently right, but he has given us the most definitive account we have. He is more thorough in recounting the history of this subject than any other writer, and more tenacious in separating myth from fact. On page after page of this long chronicle, we find accurately described for us a great many episodes that have been willfully and mischievously misrepresented in the political and historical writings of the last twenty years.

This, of course, is the main reason why *Out of Step* and its author have been so harshly treated in the liberal press. Now in his eighty-fifth year, Hook is still tireless in his determination to set

the record straight, and tenacious in his willingness to correct falsehoods and call their authors to account. Truth-telling of this sort is bound to be damaging to the many reputations it encompasses, and it should come as no surprise when its victims, or their representatives, attempt to strike back. Yet how rarely are they able to marshal the facts in their own defense. As we have seen in the case of Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., what we are offered instead is a wholesale exercise in denial.

Hook has been around long enough to have observed at first hand a good deal of the historical experience he is at pains to recount for us in such vivid detail. His memory is still sharp, and his familiarity with the historical evidence without rival. He knows where the bodies are buried, and if the task he has assumed in disinterring so many political corpses is not always a pretty one—and it is not—it is nonetheless an extremely important one at this moment of history when, as the result of the war in Vietnam and the other cataclysms of the 60's that shattered the liberal anti-Communist movement in this country, an entrenched revisionism has induced a phenomenal historical amnesia to spread like a plague among intellectuals and politicians alike.

It is sobering to look back now to the time—1949-50, say, the period that saw the publication of books like *The Vital Center* and *The Liberal Imagination*—when some of the finest minds of the American intellectual class were vigorously engaged in the effort to free our democratic culture from the noxious illusions about totalitarianism that had cost our country—and the world—so much in the preceding decade, and were gratefully admired for doing so. The world has changed, but has it really changed for the better as far as the power and influence of democracy are concerned? Are we less endangered now than we were then? Communism was then clearly and correctly per-

ceived to be a worldwide threat to the survival of democratic institutions, but it actually controlled the fate of far fewer inhabitants of the globe than it does today. Under Stalin, both the military power of the Soviet Union and its vast espionage apparatus were seen to constitute a danger to every non-Communist society in the world—including that of the United States—yet Gorbachev commands a far greater war machine than any Stalin ever had at his disposal, and if recent revelations are any guide, a no less effective espionage network. By every significant measure, the Soviet Union is a far more formidable adversary today than it was forty years ago, and one of the things that makes it more formidable is its unbroken record of conquest in the intervening years. It already enjoys an unchallenged hegemony in more parts of the world than it did forty years ago, and the momentum of its drive to seek further conquests shows no sign of abatement.

Yet the intellectual class in this country which once met with intelligence and valor what was, in truth, a simpler and less daunting challenge to the survival of our political institutions and our cultural traditions than the one we face today has been transformed, for the most part, into a force that at best withholds its assent from American initiatives on the world scene and at worst actively argues in support of policies guaranteed to diminish our resistance to Communist expansion. In 1949, when Arthur Schlesinger looked back on an intellectual class similarly disposed to forfeit its defense of free institutions, he spoke without fear of contradiction of a *trahison des clercs*. Today, he—or anyone else—who spoke in such terms would be run out of the academy with cries of McCarthyism! It is because it speaks to this macabre situation with such courage and probity that Sidney Hook's *Out of Step* is finally such an indispensable text for our time.

A Farewell to Civil Rights

James Nuechterlein

WE DO NOT have to live very long to discover that life is forever passing us by. We continually obsolesce, and our ideas all go out of fashion in time. Ordinarily those passings-by—and the feelings of melancholy, frustration, and regret that typically accompany them—are matters of only personal concern. Sometimes, though, they coincide with consequential public developments and participate in social transformations that are worthy of general notice. So I take it to be with my very peripheral involvement in the civil-rights movement of the past three decades. My role in the cause was marginal, but my experience has been not unrepresentative of the uncertain and tortuous path that civil rights has traveled in recent times.

Let me begin to specify. Last spring I resigned as chairman of the Indiana Advisory Committee of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights. I did so because it seemed to me that the useful work of the commission had come to an end. That in turn was the case in large part because the relentless charges of bad faith against the commission on the part of the civil-rights establishment had wrecked the commission's credibility. I did not credit those charges—in fact, I resented them deeply—but I recognized their effect.

The grounds for estrangement between the commission and its critics were many, but at their heart lay fundamentally different conceptions not merely of where civil-rights policies ought to go but of how they should be defined in the first place. The traditional conceptions of civil rights to which the commission and its supporters clung had over time been not so much amended by their opponents as stood on their head. Across the resulting definitional chasm there was little to do but hurl mutual accusations of sabotage and betrayal. In the commission's work and beyond, civil conversation about civil rights had become virtually impossible.

I see no early or easy way out of the impasse we have got ourselves into. But it may be of some value to attempt to trace, by way of reflections

on personal experience, how we reached our present unpromising position.

II

ON AUGUST 28, 1963, I found myself—rather to my own surprise—participating with almost 200,000 other Americans in the March on Washington for civil rights. It was the proudest single moment in the entire civil-rights crusade and one of the great moral occasions of American history. I will always feel honored to have been part of it.

Yet I wound up there only as the result of a last-minute change of mind in which momentary enthusiasm triumphed over sober judgment. Active involvement in the civil-rights movement did not come naturally to me. Certainly little in my background prepared me for it.

My parents, both born shortly after the turn of the century, grew up in circumstances as isolated from civil rights—or any other concern of mainstream American society—as could possibly be imagined. Their German Lutheran families had both emigrated to America in the 1840's but had settled in rural communities in the Saginaw Valley area of Michigan so homogeneous and so cut off from the larger American context as to constitute a cultural universe virtually impervious to external influences. One measure of their isolation is that as late as the 1950's, over a century after the German settlers had first arrived, children born in the Frankenmuth area still learned German at least as soon as they learned English and spoke their English with distinct German accents. There were of course no blacks anywhere around; indeed, anyone not a German Lutheran was an exotic.

It was not until my parents moved to Detroit in the mid-1930's (where I was born shortly afterward) that they encountered blacks regularly or in numbers. Even then, those encounters occurred at a considerable distance. None of the various working-class or lower-middle-class neighborhoods we lived in on Detroit's east side was integrated; they were ethnically diverse, but they were not racially mixed. We always got out before the

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blacks moved in, although the margin was sometimes close.

My parents' knowledge of life in black Detroit came essentially from reading, rumor, and personal observation at the periphery. By report they learned—or thought they learned—of high crime rates, chronic drunkenness, loose sexual habits, weak family structures, and disinclination to steady employment. The little they had of personal experience of the black community did not cause them to question the received wisdom. In those neighborhoods we occupied near or at the edge of the racial dividing line, it was for them—and for me—an observable fact that as the blacks edged closer, conditions deteriorated: the stores became bleaker and dirtier, the streets were more littered and less safe, schools declined in quality and standards of behavior, houses and lawns displayed evidence of neglect. At one time we lived near a low-income housing project. It had always been a grim and unattractive place, but as its racial composition shifted gradually from white to black, it became what it had not been before: a thoroughly filthy, depressing, and dangerous slum.

All this produced in my parents a kind of benign racism. They never—anyway not in the presence of their children—used the word “nigger,” and their comments on black people were neither frequent nor emotional, but it was always clear that their attitude toward blacks in general was one of distaste and disapproval. They did not all that often think of blacks, but when they did they did not think well of them. With their unsophisticated social views and their limited experience of life, they each took the world beyond family and church (which constituted the true centers of their existence) as it appeared on the surface. People, singly or collectively, were what they made of themselves. If blacks in general seemed to live in ways that by the only standards my parents knew were immoral or irresponsible, then they deserved to be judged accordingly. Those judgments might be tempered by Christian charity or compassion, but they were in themselves entirely unproblematic.

So I grew up. Yet I was never, at least not on race relations, my parents' child. Not that I was particularly rebellious in general. My mother was apolitical (she never knew whether to vote for the Democrats and war or the Republicans and economic depression) and my father was a Taft Republican; my declaration of political independence extended no farther than a preference for the Eisenhower/Rockefeller wing of Republicanism. But on civil rights I was an unabashed liberal. From the beginning, I needed neither sociological instruction nor moral persuasion: I *knew* that it was wrong to discriminate against people on the basis of race and that much

of the pathology of black life resulted from barriers to equal opportunity thrown up by white prejudice. Cut off by temperament and Lutheran principles from political zealotry, I could nonetheless approach the civil-rights question with an unaccustomed attitude of moral certitude.

I was not alone in this, of course. Those who charge the generation that came of age in the 50's with an absence of moral passion have things right for the most part. We were typically gradualists, incrementalists, pragmatists; irony and ambiguity dominated our political imaginations. But civil rights was different. We weren't yet ready to take the issue to the streets (we were appalled by the very idea of conducting politics in the streets), but on this matter irony and ambiguity evaporated. On civil rights we *knew*, and we cared. (The only other issue on which we approached passionate consensus was the proposition that Joe McCarthy was a moral and intellectual disgrace.)

It appalled me that the church to which my family belonged—a magnificent neo-gothic cathedral located near downtown Detroit in a decayed nonresidential neighborhood—remained an all-white bastion in an area whose few immediate residents and whose contiguous populations were predominantly black. It was bad enough that the congregation—all of whose members lived some distance away—made no effort to draw in black members; it was intolerable that on those infrequent occasions when black people appeared at worship services, they were politely but pointedly informed of the location of the city's black Lutheran churches. My father and I argued about all this endlessly, and I determined that once independent of my family I would have no part in such arrangements.

Given my attitudes on civil rights, it was ironic (and embarrassing) that my personal relations with blacks were as awkward as they were. To begin with, I did not know any blacks well. The schools I attended normally enrolled at least a small number of them, and I had occasionally played with or against blacks in baseball or basketball leagues, but none had become close friends. Despite my desires to the contrary, I remained acutely aware of skin color, and on the few occasions when I found myself in a predominantly black gathering, I felt distinctly uncomfortable. Blacks in groups—male blacks at least—frightened me. (Once, when I was thirteen, I took the wrong streetcar on Gratiot Avenue and wound up deep in a black neighborhood; it was broad daylight and no one challenged me as I walked, as swiftly as I could, back to “safety,” but I was terrified the entire time.)

Still, when I headed off to college in 1956, I had a genuine if not truly intense commitment to civil rights, and the next four years at Valparaiso University confirmed and deepened that commitment. The liberal professors who instructed

me in my academic concentrations in American history and politics provided historical and intellectual evidence to support my predispositions on the issue. All my close friends, whether or not they were political, held sympathetic views on race relations. I became an enthusiastic supporter of the Lutheran Human Relations Association of America, a pioneer Christian civil-rights organization then located on the Valparaiso campus.

There was, it is true, a somewhat artificial cast to the support of civil rights there. The town was lily white, the campus not much different. Our liberalism was sometimes more earnest than serious. There was, for example, the case of Clarence. Clarence was one of the handful of blacks in my class. Proud, sensitive, somewhat aloof, he was not an easy man to know. Most of us respected Clarence but did not know quite what to make of him; in Willy Loman's terms, he was liked but not well-liked. Yet when he ran for vice president of the student council, he won by what must have been the largest margin in the school's history. The size of the victory was embarrassing, not least to Clarence himself. We had all voted for him because we did not know how not to.

But by the fall of 1960, when I began graduate work in American Studies at Yale, the civil-rights movement was about to move beyond pious rhetoric and earnest gestures. In the next few years, the movement exploded across the South: sit-ins, freedom rides, voter-education drives, integration of schools and universities, massive protests aimed at breaking the back of the whole structure of segregation. In the beginning, the protests were overwhelmingly black and Southern, but before long Northern whites became substantially involved.

Everything the protesters wanted, I wanted. With them, I initially found the Kennedy administration insufficiently activist in its support of their efforts, and I was heartened when, under black and liberal pressure, Kennedy finally sent to Congress in June 1963 the measure that eventually became the comprehensive Civil Rights Act of 1964.

Yet when the first calls went out for a massive March on Washington in support of the movement in general and the congressional bill in particular, I hesitated. I did not like the proposed march's air of emotionalism and hint of intimidation. Black Southerners had no choice but to engage in massive public protest since they were effectively excluded from participation in the political process. That was not the case at the national level. Legislative politics, I thought, should be a matter of careful reflection and rational debate, and the politics of mass demonstration seemed to me a threat to both. In the Congress of the United States, after all, we were not dealing with a gang of redneck reactionaries. I wanted Congress to pass the civil-rights bill because it was the right and prudent thing to do, not because it

felt stampeded. Large public demonstrations seemed to me in general an invitation to demagoguery and irrationalism, a populist vote of no confidence in the orderly processes of representative government that maintain political civility and decency. (I have never changed my mind on these matters; the March on Washington was my first and last involvement in mass protest.)

Then, too, there was a growing mood of moral superiority attendant on the movement with which I felt uncomfortable and which I suspected the march would intensify. I knew that racism and segregation were morally wrong and I had great respect for the moral serenity with which Southern blacks and whites confronted their neighbors over their region's burden of guilt and failure in matters of racial justice. But the attitude of utter contempt and hatred for white Southerners with which so many Northern white activists expressed their commitment to the cause seemed to me lacking in both historical comprehension and moral discernment. Martin Luther King's appeals to Southern blacks to love their oppressors occasionally struck me as demanding more of human nature than could reasonably be expected under the circumstances, but they displayed a degree of compassion and understanding for the white South that relatively few Northern activists had the patience or the moral imagination to comprehend.

BUT for all my reservations, when the time for the march came, I went. The cause was so obviously right, the need so urgent, the mood so overwhelmingly one not of threat but of expression of concern, that my hesitations came to appear to my own mind as excessively fastidious. At the last moment, I knew I had to go.

And so I found myself, having made no advance plans, grabbing a seat on one of the last special buses leaving New Haven for Washington. The bus had been chartered by the local black Catholic parish, and I was the only white on board. I was immediately made to feel at home, however, by a kindly matriarch who beckoned me to sit next to her and who introduced me all around. Her only moment of reservation toward me came when, in reply to the question, "You a Catholic boy?" I replied, "No, ma'am, I'm a Lutheran." That took her aback, but she quickly recovered: this clearly was to be a day that transcended even divisions between papists and Protestants.

As many observers have remarked, the march resembled nothing so much as a massive church picnic (except that most church picnics are not as well integrated). Unlike so many of the marches on so many of the issues that were to follow, there was no spirit of bitterness, defiance, or alienation; all was celebration and affirmation. We marched for what was self-evidently good and true, and we believed that a society basically decent and just would recognize that truth and that goodness.

Time has obscured most of the memories of the occasion, but I do vividly recall—and not just because history has enshrined it—Dr. King's magnificent "I Have a Dream" speech. There was lots of entertainment that day, and there were lots of speeches. For most of us—especially those like me located on the fringes of the crowd—attention flagged. But when King's turn finally came, he commanded notice from the start, and he held us in the bonds of his extraordinary imagery and intensity. I remember that halfway through the speech, an elderly black man just in front of me turned and remarked to no one in particular, "Man, don't he talk fine." He did, and none of us there will ever forget it. As the historian Allen Matusow has said, King's speech "elevated the march from a mere political tactic into a spiritual event."

The march was a success in every way. It took some time for the civil-rights bill to work its way through Congress, but I remember watching on television with great pleasure—and even a small sense of participation—when Lyndon Johnson signed the bill into law in July 1964. At the time I was at a Lutheran family camp on Lake Michigan where I was delivering a series of lectures on Christians and politics. The lectures emphasized—in good Lutheran fashion—the complexities and ambiguities of applying Christian principles to political situations, but I noted that on certain issues, civil rights currently chief among them, the moral outlines of the question were clear enough, and that on such issues appeals to complexity constituted evasion of responsibility rather than recognition of reality. After 1964, however, civil-rights policy was never to appear so simple to me again.

III

AS WITH so much of American life at the time, civil rights after 1964 went terribly wrong. Certain achievements still lay ahead—major congressional bills in 1965 and 1968 established federal involvement in voting rights and fair housing—but the heroic age of liberal success had passed, and it was rapidly succeeded by a bewildering descent into ever more violent and bizarre forms of radical upheaval and of sadly confused and misguided responses to those upheavals. America almost came apart in the late 60's, and the unraveling of the civil-rights movement was a central element in the process of dissolution.

I observed most of this from a distance. In the fall of 1964 I began teaching American history at Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario, Canada. Thus cut off from direct participation, I nonetheless kept close to civil-rights developments through television (Canadians tend to watch almost as much American television as Americans do), reading, my teaching and writing interest in the sub-

ject, and, above all, very frequent visits to the U.S., especially to my family in Detroit. Through my family, I participated in the urban racial crises of those years. At times, indeed, the participation was quite direct. Even as I had been present at the civil-rights movement's moment of glory, so I was on the scene when things hit bottom: I was in Detroit during the 1967 riot, the worst of all the racial cataclysms of the period.

The mid-60's started out as the best of reform times. Passage of the civil-rights bills of 1964 and 1965 marked the successful completion of the movement's drive to end the Southern segregation system in education, political participation, public accommodations, and employment. Legal rights to equal opportunity had been firmly established. Implementation of those rights was to be neither automatic nor easy, of course, but it is no exaggeration to say that a revolution in race relations had been set in motion in the American South.

And so the movement turned North. The targets there were housing, schools, and jobs, and the aims were to eliminate the de facto forms of segregation that persisted in all three and, with that, to improve the economic and social conditions of life for black citizens. As President Johnson declared in his address at Howard University in June 1965, it was time to move beyond the provision of equal opportunity for blacks and attempt to secure "equality as a fact and equality as a result."

Prospects at first appeared propitious. The nation was prosperous, the public mood generous, and liberal expectations optimistic. But the moment of hopefulness passed quickly.

It turned out to be far more difficult for blacks to move from poverty to prosperity than it had been to advance from segregation to legal equality. Patterns of racial discrimination in the North were more deeply entrenched than many had suspected, and they had left legacies of social dislocation in the black community that made it difficult for some elements in the community to make the best of the opportunities that were open to them. Because the problems went deeper than reformers had thought, the leverage of government to effect change was considerably less than they had supposed. Equality of economic and social condition, it turned out, could not be achieved—as desegregation had been achieved—simply through organizing protests, passing laws, and enforcing court orders. It was to be at best a long-term project, and the mood of rising expectations that had swept black America in the early 60's had no patience for talk of the long term.

Not that things had not improved. During the course of the decade, in fact, black Americans made measurable advances, both absolutely and in relation to whites, in income, occupation, and education. But the rate of improvement was slower than had been promised (there was an incred-

ible amount of overpromising in those years); worse, the advance of some in the black community to middle-class comfort set in bold relief the inability of other parts of the community to keep pace. The quarrel that ensued concerned more than statistics about progress or regression; it involved the emotionally-loaded questions of where the primary obstacles to further black progress lay and how and by whom those obstacles might best be removed.

Everyone agreed that most of the problems of black America derived, directly or indirectly, from slavery and segregation and that government had a special responsibility to do everything in its power to remove the legal and customary remnants of racial discrimination. Most conceded that black progress toward equality of condition would require more than self-help programs; at the outset, at least, there was widespread support for the myriad Great Society programs intended to lift the poor in general, and minorities in particular, above the poverty line. Disagreements arose, however, when some analysts began to suggest, however tentatively, that there now existed within the black community patterns of social pathology—family decay, welfare dependency, soaring crime rates, educational failure—that, whatever their historical origins, had taken on a life of their own independent of white prejudice and that would have to be fought and overcome by efforts within the community itself.

For black militants and their white allies, however, such forms of analysis—as in Daniel Patrick Moynihan's 1965 paper on *The Negro Family: The Case for National Action*—constituted exercises in “blaming the victim” and avoiding social responsibility, even when, as in Moynihan's case, great care was taken precisely both to avoid putting blame on blacks and to emphasize the key role of government in helping blacks help themselves. For those persuaded that the essential, even the sole, black problem was white prejudice, and that that prejudice was so pervasive and overwhelming in its social effects as to leave blacks helpless to make it in America so long as it persisted, any focus at all on the internal problems of black culture could only be seen as a diversion and an evasion, itself evidence of racist attitudes. Racism was *the* problem, its elimination from the white psyche the only solution. In the meantime, amelioration would only come for blacks from “massive” government programs of aid and support that might to some degree circumvent the all-devouring prejudice that doomed reliance on private initiatives, white or black, to inevitable failure.

THE more I pondered these ideas, whether as a concerned expatriate or as a professor attempting to instruct my bemused Canadian students in the folkways of American life,

the less sense they made. Of course the black situation was unlike that of any other group in America, but as a historian I knew that other minority groups—Orientals and Jews, for example—had managed to make their way in the U.S. despite being targets of vicious and visceral prejudice, and that they had done so by cultivating skills and cultural strengths that allowed them to succeed in the face of discrimination from dominant groups in society. That blacks could do so as well was demonstrated by the continuing growth of the black middle class. The view that black progress was a gift solely in the hands of whites to withhold or bestow seemed to me destructive and self-defeating. The problem of the black underclass, I gradually decided, had more to do with the vicissitudes of class than of race.

It was not simply racism, for example, that caused white people to flee neighborhoods into which blacks were moving. I knew that from the experience of my sister, Kay (who died a few years ago of cancer), who was four years younger than I and intensely committed to racial justice and harmony. When she struck out on her own in her early twenties, she chose to live in racially-mixed neighborhoods. But the decay of those neighborhoods—most particularly, the threat and reality of black crime—forced her to a series of moves. She did not give up easily. The first time—in an apartment not far from downtown Detroit—she joined with an interracial group of friends to organize a crime-watch operation on the block, but it was not enough. We finally talked her into moving when, after a series of scares, she was robbed at knife-point in front of her apartment in broad daylight.

After that she found a larger apartment on the west side of town in a better, but still racially-mixed, neighborhood. (My father moved in with her after the death of my mother in 1969.) She stayed there several years, but it was a losing struggle. Each time I visited her, I could observe signs in the area of gradual deterioration—dirtier streets, shabbier stores, reduced residential maintenance—while she reluctantly recounted horror stories of neighborhood crime. What bothered her most was that she was learning to fear blacks in general, and she knew that over time all the good will and understanding in the world would not prevent that fear from turning into something worse.

It unsettled her to be an object of overt hatred simply by virtue of being white. It began with dirty looks (was she imagining things, she wondered?) and proceeded to ugly words (“white bitch,” two young black men muttered at her as she passed them on the street) and finally to physical assault (a rifle pellet through the kitchen window). By then she and my father (who had been mugged while waiting for a bus) were spending much of the time shut up in their apartment, at

least after dark, as in a state of siege. Reserves of good will and humor—"How do I get them to realize I'm a liberal?"—ran low. Finally she moved again, this time—even though burdened by nagging feelings of guilt—to an all-white apartment complex beyond the city limits.

Stories like my sister's (and they could be replicated endlessly all over urban America during the 60's and 70's) elicited little sympathy from black radicals and their white allies. White America was finally being given some of its own back, the argument went. After all, the movement from civil rights to black nationalism, with its attendant increase in anti-white feelings, was only an understandable response to white prejudice and recalcitrance. Black power, Black Muslims, Black Panthers: they were all conditioned responses to racist stimuli, not random social occurrences. If blacks had learned to hate whites, that was simply, as it was said, the hate that hate produced.

Fair enough, at a surface level. But where, socially speaking, might one go with such an argument? What does society usefully do with a proposition that not only understands but condones racial hatred? Besides which, the argument was fundamentally misleading, at least in contemporary terms. During the mid-60's, black and white racial attitudes passed each other going in opposite directions. Empirical measures of white attitudes showed a decline in racial prejudice, while the emergence of black nationalism, whether or not it affected general black feelings about whites, raised the idea of black rage to consciousness and, above all, gave it social legitimacy.

The effects were entirely perverse. Well-intentioned whites, willing at least in principle to live in harmony with blacks, were alienated by patterns of behavior among underprivileged blacks to which they quite properly objected but which they all too frequently attributed to racial rather than class characteristics. Blacks, already conditioned in that direction, quite understandably interpreted white reactions as racially inspired. In fact, middle-class people, of whatever race, had always tried to insulate and remove themselves from lower-class behavior, whatever its racial origins. The "racial stereotypes" that blacks assumed whites held of them had been the views that the middle class had always attributed to the lower class, and those views had in fact often been not stereotypes but more-or-less accurate generalizations. For black and white alike, the necessary project was to separate racial and class attributes, and to proceed from there.

Instead, the civil-rights establishment continued to indulge in interpretations of racial issues that studiously avoided uncomfortable realities and that provided exculpation for forms of minority behavior that were, by any rational assessment, self-defeating, socially destructive, and morally indefensible. The best of intentions led to the worst

of social analysis and prescription, as became depressingly clear in the response to the black riots that began in Birmingham in 1963 and that spread across much of urban America through the rest of the decade. It would be difficult to overstate the damage done by the riots to race relations in America, and the Detroit uprising of 1967, the worst of them all, typified the general disaster.

IT BEGAN, as so many of the upheavals did, with a police incident. Early in the morning of Sunday, July 23, there was a disturbance between police and patrons of a bar in the Detroit inner city. Before long, mobs of young people began to engage in burning, looting, and random violence. The police, aware of charges that in earlier situations official "overreaction" to minor incidents had made matters worse, did not in the early stages send large numbers of officers into the area. They also got cooperation for a media blackout, on the assumption—based again on the presumed lessons of earlier outbreaks—that media attention tended to encourage further riotous behavior. But neither of these precautionary measures had the desired effect. The rioting intensified and spread, eventually encompassing fourteen square miles of black neighborhoods. In several of the earlier outbreaks, mobs had displayed some form of disciplined selectivity, leaving black-owned properties intact as they assaulted white ones. Not so in Detroit, where the violence was entirely indiscriminate: mobs burned and looted black businesses as freely as white ones and burned down black homes as well. Well-to-do blacks from outside the ghetto entered the riot areas and joined in the looting. What occurred in Detroit was not, in any immediate sense, social or political protest; it was mob nihilism.

My wife and I had come into the Detroit area on Saturday, staying with my brother in Livonia, a suburb west of the city. My sister, then living in her apartment near downtown Detroit, had stayed overnight in Livonia with us. Because of the news blackout, we heard nothing of the riot until Sunday afternoon when other members of the family came out to Livonia from Detroit and reported that as they had driven along the expressway past black neighborhoods they had seen vast clouds of smoke. Soon afterward, the media blackout was canceled, and we learned what was in process.

By Monday morning, news reports indicated that the police and the National Guard had brought things under control, and so my wife, sister, and I drove into the city, as we had previously planned, to stay at my sister's apartment. Her apartment was located a few blocks away from the expressway that divided her racially-mixed neighborhood from the Detroit ghetto. The day was quiet, but the evening—in which the riot resumed with increased intensity—became surreal. Temperatures were high that night and the apartment

had no air-conditioning, so we kept the windows open.

As we played cards at the kitchen table, we could hear the regular sound of rifle fire coming from the nearby riot area. It was as if someone had left on an old war-movie soundtrack in the background. Later that night, after midnight, we heard the rumblings of what we later learned were troop vehicles moving along the expressway. For the first time in all the terrible racial upheavals of the 60's, things had gotten so out of hand that officials had been forced to call in federal troops. Before order was restored, there were 43 dead, 7,000 arrested, 1,300 buildings destroyed, and 2,700 businesses looted.

The experience of the riot was awful, its aftermath almost worse. Most Americans realized that such behavior, however much it might be understood, could not be tolerated. America, they knew, for all its lingering racial prejudice, was not a society so pervaded by racist assumptions that only irrational violence was open to its minorities. Many liberals, however, responded to the crisis by finding excuses for the inexcusable. They even managed to persuade themselves that the riots would have a positive net effect: white America would finally be brought to see how desperate was the black plight and thus would be moved to remedial action.

In fact, the effect of the riots was quite the reverse. A majority of white Americans had felt themselves affected by the moral appeals of Martin Luther King and had come to accept the argument that American society had for too long relegated black people to second-class citizenship and had to take positive steps to make amends. But the riots eroded much of that good will. They provided evidentiary support not for reformers but for racists, and they antagonized countless middle Americans open to the possibility of change but closed to the idea that America was so morally corrupt that it deserved to be torn apart. The riots polarized a society that had been potentially ready for significant reform.

The liberal response made things worse. The President's National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders (the Kerner Commission) reported in 1968 that the single most fundamental cause of the riots was white racism. It might have made sense to argue that white racial attitudes were most to blame, over the long run, for the disabilities of black Americans, but specifically to attribute the riots to white racism both stretched the causal link to the breaking point and, however inadvertently, demeaned black people by denying them any real role of moral agency. It was one thing to recognize the genuine frustration about real grievances that led some blacks to lash out blindly, something else to leave the impression that the black situation was so hopeless, and so utterly dependent on white behavior for any kind

of modification, that such lashings-out by blacks constituted the only line of action open to them. It perpetuated the idea that black people had identity only as historical victims, people to whom things simply happened. In post-segregationist America, that was no longer a sufficient perspective.

Most white Americans rejected the image of themselves as ridden with racism and thus simply shrugged off the commission's exercise in guilt-mongering, even as, in the light of mounting evidence of the Great Society's inadequacies, they looked skeptically at the commission's view that only massive government programs offered any hope for making things better for black society. In the aftermath of the riots, only a minority of Americans were interested in "blaming the victims," but a large number of them had become persuaded that solutions to the nation's race problems could not develop so long as blacks were encouraged to see themselves *only* as victims.

Over the next decade, indeed, many observers, both black and white, came to the same conclusion as they recognized the analytical and prescriptive dead end into which conventional left-wing understandings of the racial problem had led. People involved in the issue as either activists or analysts decided that civil-rights questions needed more rigorous examination and more narrow focusing.

As I continued to teach and occasionally write on the subject, it became ever more apparent to me that attempts to reduce racial dilemmas to a problem of moral insufficiency on the part of whites did more to muddy the race issue than to clarify it. Racial prejudice persisted, but opinion polls continued to mark its decline and its ebbing social legitimacy, especially among the generally well-educated Americans who make the society's most important political and economic decisions. Most whites, even if they continued to harbor negative personal feelings about blacks, recognized racism as socially counterproductive.

One did not, I concluded, have to presuppose heroic moral sensibilities on the part of whites to assume that they understood by now that the degradation of black people operated in no one's interests. Slums, poverty, and the social pathologies accompanying them degraded all Americans, regardless of their color or the state of their moral imaginations. Those psychic benefits that some whites might derive from clinging to a sense of racial superiority could hardly compensate for the grievous and evident social costs that racial inequality exacted with respect to crime rates, welfare expenditures, visual blight, civil disorder, and the general deterioration of the social fabric. Whether or not whites were capable of learning to love blacks, surely they could and did see that the

provision of social justice for blacks coincided with their own self-interest.

That led to the real heart of the problem: the definition of "social justice" as it applied to civil-rights policy. How, in particular, was society to get at the problems of those lower-class blacks who, for a variety of reasons, had not participated in the striking advances that the black working class and middle class had made? Policy disputes over issues of welfare, job programs, housing policies, income supplements, and educational improvement (which it is not possible here to detail) dragged on inconclusively through the 70's and into the 80's, as did the more general disagreement over whether the major continuing sources and solutions of black difficulties lay outside the black community or within it.

Like most people, I knew that the latter question was not an either/or matter; also like most people, I vacillated uncertainly in trying to discern the right balance. By the early 80's, after I had returned to Valparaiso University to teach and edit the *Cresset*, the university's journal of ideas, I had come to the quite unsatisfactory conclusion that on the single most important domestic issue of the society, Americans simply did not know what needed to be done. The problem was not lack of will; it was the absence of dependable knowledge.

Not everything was uncertainty, however. I was convinced that certain causes taken up by the latter-day civil-rights movement—busing, for example—represented a diversion from the real issues, while other causes—notably quotas—involved a repudiation of the very principles the movement represented.

One of the worst mistakes the modern civil-rights movement (the NAACP in particular) ever made was to invest so much of its time, energy, and moral fervor in such a dubious cause as mandatory school busing. The attempt to require racial balance in the schools (busing may originally have been intended as a means to end segregation, but it quickly became an instrument of forced integration) lacked either a mass constituency or a plausible rationale. Most parents, black and white, were reluctant to send their children out of their neighborhoods to attend distant schools, especially when those schools were perceived, often correctly, as educationally inferior or even physically dangerous. Those who favored mandatory busing were seldom those whose own children were involved.

No one ever satisfactorily explained why racial balance was necessary to achieve decent education for black children, and the apparent assumption that those children could only learn effectively in the presence of some critical mass of white children understandably struck many blacks as condescending at best. Busing wasted money that

would have been better spent in classrooms; it created unnecessary racial and class divisions; and, after all that, it wound up failing anyway: one school system after another on which busing was imposed resegregated itself through white flight. Well-intentioned people supported busing because it seemed a symbol of a noble end; seldom has the price of symbolic politics been so high.

Busing was bad; quotas were worse. The concept developed, innocently enough at first, from the idea of affirmative action. Although the definitional distinction has been hopelessly obscured over the years, the idea of affirmative action did not necessarily imply quotas. No one could reasonably object to efforts to seek out qualified members of minority groups for educational or occupational advancement, and it was not wrong to offer special training or remedial opportunities to disadvantaged minorities to improve their levels of qualification. But when affirmative action shaded into quotas, when efforts to make equality of opportunity more meaningful got translated into demands for mandated equality of condition, legitimate questions arose.

Quota systems do, in practice, require reverse discrimination, as a number of Supreme Court decisions from *Bakke* onward have demonstrated, and they thereby contradict what the idea of civil rights has always been presumed to mean. Moreover, those thus discriminated against are in many cases themselves members of ethnic groups that can in no reasonable way be classified among the privileged classes in America. The belief that advancement in our society should come according to individual effort and skill without regard to attributes of ancestry, class, or religion stands at the very heart of the American idea—it forms the core of the American Dream—and attempts to remedy prior violations of that ideal through a system of group rights that imposes new modes of discrimination while it subverts the ideal itself make no moral sense.

Acts of racial discrimination require compensation, but the basis for judgment in such cases should, in equity, be specific and individual, and not simply a mark of color. Quotas, in any case, often work in favor of those in minority groups least likely to have been victims of educational or occupational deprivation. Black applicants to law and medical schools, like their white counterparts, tend to come from the middle class, not from depressed urban slums.

It was a mark of the departure of the civil-rights movement from its original meanings that issues like busing and quotas arose. Nonetheless, by the 1980's they had become identified as the very essence of the movement; to oppose them was to be perceived by many as being opposed to civil rights itself. That was a lesson I was about to learn personally.

IV

THE Civil Rights Commission was created by Congress in 1957 as an independent, bipartisan agency to investigate complaints of discrimination, appraise federal anti-discrimination laws and policies, and make reports and recommendations to the President and Congress on how to end discrimination. Although it lacked enforcement powers, the commission, its six members appointed by the President, made itself over the years a visible and effective voice for civil rights under such prominent chairmen as Father Theodore Hesburgh.

As with all other voices of the civil-rights establishment, the commission opposed the policies of the Reagan administration, which rejected busing and quotas and which argued in general that civil rights, properly understood, had to do only with the guarantee of individual equal opportunity, not group rights or equal results. In 1983, unhappy with a series of reports that criticized his administration, President Reagan fired a number of commissioners and appointed new members more in line with his philosophy. A lengthy battle ensued, and Congress finally approved a compromise reorganization of the commission that divided appointments to the commission between Congress and the administration, with the result that the President was able to maintain a majority on the new eight-person body.

Led by the new chairman, Clarence Pendleton, a prominent black conservative, and by staff director Linda Chavez (later succeeded by acting director Max Green), the reorganized commission moved to make itself a forthright exponent of the Reagan philosophy of civil rights. From the beginning, the central issue was quotas. Critics of the commission majority, led within the commission by congressional appointee Mary Frances Berry, charged the administration with general dereliction in enforcing civil-rights laws, but no one doubted that the quota question was the heart of the matter.

New controversy arose early in 1985 over the question of the State Advisory Committees (SACs) of the commission. In establishing the commission in the first place, Congress had required that it appoint Advisory Committees in each of the states and the District of Columbia. Those committees were rechartered every two years, and 1985 offered the first opportunity for the new commission majority to restructure the SACs to meet its policy goals.

And so early that year I got a call from the commission staff in Washington asking if I would be willing to serve on the Indiana SAC. I wasn't sure that the Reagan administration understood as urgently as it should the crisis of black America, but I agreed entirely with its views on the quota question, and so I quickly agreed to serve. A week

or so later, I received another call: would I be willing to serve as chairman? I hesitated longer over that. What would be the nature of my committee? Would I have a workable majority? What about staff support? Things, I was told, were in transition and nothing was entirely clear, but the commission staff was prepared to offer full support. After a few days' deliberation, I decided to accept the offer.

Before long, I began to see what I had let myself in for. News stories started to pick up on the reorganization of the SACs. The changes were startling. Only one of the former state chairmen received reappointment. White male chairmen increased from eight before the reorganization to thirty-three afterward. Minority males declined from twenty-two to fourteen, minority females from thirteen to one, white females from seven to three. I understood the reasons behind the demographic changes (how many minority females with civil-rights experience would one find opposed to quotas?), but I also understood that the changes constituted *prima-facie* evidence for those predisposed to find the commission guilty of disregard for minority concerns. The turnover in SAC chairmen received a fair amount of media notice and editorial comment, almost all of it negative or, at best, cautionary. "It would surprise me if anyone of integrity would want to serve," said the dean of one law school.

The reactions of colleagues at the university (mostly liberal, of course) to my appointment further reflected the burdens of disbelief I faced. "But you don't believe in civil rights," they said, by which they meant not that I was a bigot or that I did not believe in equal opportunity, but that I was publicly opposed to quotas. So had the definition of civil rights now been reduced, and so was my problem defined (and this among friends).

The makeup of the new Indiana SAC was no help. The commission staff in Washington had not had the time fully to reorganize the overall SAC memberships, so I faced a committee with six new appointees (myself included) and five holdovers. The holdovers—each one of them committed to the establishment view of civil rights—were all black (three of them women); of the six newcomers five were white males, all of them, I soon learned, advocates of the administration's anti-quota views. I never learned if I enjoyed a working majority or not. The sixth new appointee, a black woman, missed most of our meetings and when she was there never said a word.

MY SERVICE as chairman was brief, undistinguished, and generally unhappy. That should not be exaggerated or misunderstood. The members of the committee got along well personally and, I am genuinely convinced, respected one another. We accomplished a number of minor useful things, including the con-

duct of a quite successful fair-housing conference in South Bend. Beyond that, on a range of issues from desegregation of the Fort Wayne elementary schools to monitoring of the civil-rights aspects of the administration's block-grant program, we treaded water. It seemed to me that with a committee so closely divided ideologically and so evenly constituted on racial lines it would not make sense to tackle directly the hard issues that separated the Reagan administration from its critics. As chairman, I was not prepared to lead a civil-rights committee that consistently voted 6-5, blacks on one side, whites on the other. That kind of symbolism, I decided, would be disastrous.

My caution (was I, I wondered, statesman or wimp?) was reinforced by the civil-service staff people I worked with from the commission's Midwestern regional office in Chicago. I dealt mainly with two people there, the regional director and the civil-rights analyst assigned to do staff work for our SAC. As civil servants these two men were officially neutral on policy matters, but it was immediately apparent to me that they held to the establishment view of civil rights and that they were unhappy with the direction the commission had taken in recent years. Nonetheless, they were moved by the bureaucratic imperative to avoid controversy.

For the most part they did their jobs in a straightforward manner, but on occasion their biases showed. The most sensitive issue the Indiana SAC dealt with in my two years concerned the federal Justice Department's attempt to get the city of Indianapolis to challenge the consent decrees it had entered into with the district courts during the 1970's establishing minority- and female-hiring guidelines in the city's police and fire departments. The Justice Department interpreted those guidelines as quotas, and it wanted them tested more fully in the courts. (The department at the time held out the hope that the Supreme Court would strike down direct quotas.) The Reagan administration had come under strong criticism from civil-rights spokesmen for its actions in the matter, and its situation was complicated by the opposition of the Republican Mayor of Indianapolis, William Hudnut, to any attempt to modify the consent decrees.

AT OUR first meeting in May 1985, the SAC members agreed to conduct a community forum in Indianapolis on the issue, and we assigned to staff the task of inviting speakers representing various perspectives to address the committee at a public meeting. Shortly before the meeting was scheduled in September, I got a call from the staff representative with the list of speakers he had invited. I was stunned. The list consisted of several representatives of the city administration, beginning with the Deputy Mayor, as well as spokesmen from various civil-rights

organizations, all of which were publicly committed to the affirmative-action program the consent decrees had set in place. No one on the roster could be expected to support the Justice Department's position.

I was, to put it mildly, unhappy with the list, and I made my unhappiness clearly apparent. The staff representative seemed genuinely surprised; he was obviously so used to assuming that there was only one legitimate view on civil-rights issues, and only one set of voices that needed to be heard on those issues, that he actually could not imagine that anyone of good will would think otherwise. When I insisted that we had to have some balancing voices and made some specific suggestions on which organizations to approach, he promised to try. Contacts were made, and two organizations that opposed the city's affirmative-action program agreed to send representatives, but—probably because these were last-minute arrangements—the speakers never showed up.

The forum, therefore, consisted of an ongoing litany of praise for the city's programs (which, it became clear, certainly did consist of quotas) interrupted only by some skeptical questioning by a few committee members. At our discussions afterward, all the other SAC members agreed with my view that because we had heard only one side of the argument it would be inappropriate for the committee to take any official stand on the issue. We thus inadvertently avoided what could have been a nasty split in the committee, but the entire experience had not been edifying for either the committee or the community.

As the Indianapolis incident indicated, the other members of the committee, whatever their own civil-rights views, were no more eager than I to precipitate a confrontation. The Indiana SAC could, in other circumstances, have become an effective committee. My fellow members were intelligent and able men and women—lawyers, academics, businessmen, executives in various private and public organizations—and, although with different understandings of what the idea meant, all deeply committed to the cause of civil rights.

We never confronted our disagreements head on, partly because all of us were uncomfortable that our ideological differences coincided with our racial ones, but more, I think, because we realized that our differences on controverted civil-rights issues were so deep as to constitute an unbridgeable gap. We all felt deeply, we all knew that we would not be able to convert those on the committee who felt otherwise to our own points of view, and so we preserved the peace among ourselves by not speaking—or by speaking only obliquely—of the most important aspects of the issue that brought us together in the first place. We did not know or trust one another well enough to risk our fragile good relations with plain speaking. That was sad for us, sadder still

for what it suggested about the state of discussion of racial issues in America.

The wary civility we on the Indiana SAC maintained marked, in fact, a considerable improvement over the conditions that prevail in most discussions of civil rights in our society. We at least did not proceed on mutual assumptions of bad faith, as so many participants in civil-rights discussions seem to do. It is even possible that had the members of the committee worked together longer we might have managed to get beyond polite reticence on the issues that divided us.

WHEN I resigned as chairman, it was not in despair that the SAC could never be made to work—that remained undecided—but over certainty that under prevailing conditions the Civil Rights Commission at large had no useful function to serve, unless one finds it useful serving as perpetual whipping-boy for one's opponents. Attitudes of much of the black community toward the commission and its dominant views had become so poisoned and hateful that nothing it said had any chance of being listened to by those who most needed to hear it. When Benjamin Hooks of the NAACP told Congress earlier this year that the commission was “a sham and a national disgrace” he was, as comment on the commission by civil-rights activists goes, exercising rhetorical restraint.

The essential problem was not, as critics of the commission so often charged, that it had by its own actions made itself “controversial” in civil-rights circles (although Chairman Pendleton, with his penchant for flamboyant language, may have made himself more of an issue than was necessary or wise); any individual or institution that has something politically worth saying will inevitably get branded as controversial. Indeed, I believe that the commission in its post-1983 phase established an admirable record. It spoke with an intelligent and tough-minded voice, and its official investigations and reports were thoughtful, even-handed, and anchored in evidence and reason rather than, as is so often the case in such matters, sentimental moralizing. It adamantly opposed quotas because, in order to defend what America at its best has always been about, it had no choice not to.

The commission's actual record made little difference to its critics. It was enough for them that the commission was dominated by Reagan appointees and that it opposed quotas, which had become the litmus-test issue of civil-rights legitimacy. Those who opposed quotas were, as already noted, enemies by definition of civil rights and beyond the pale of civil discourse, functionally indistinguishable from out-and-out racists. I thought it wrong that the commission had not received a fair hearing from its critics, but I finally concluded that that fair hearing would never occur.

Congress would to my mind have done well to kill the Civil Rights Commission outright in late 1986 as it threatened for a time to do; instead, it crippled it by slashing its budget and leaving it to limp on in a mortally-wounded financial and political condition. Because of the budget reductions, the regional offices were cut from ten to three, which meant that staff support for the SACs would dwindle away. It was a good time to get out and so, rather than accept reappointment, in early 1987 I did.

V

THE bloody-mindedness of debate that has characterized the recent history of the Civil Rights Commission seems to me indicative of a continuing sense of near-apocalyptic desperation among some American blacks about civil rights. Large parts of the black community have come to insist on such dubious policies as busing and quotas—and to do so in such unmeasured terms of opprobrium for their opponents—because, it seems, they continue to believe that racism is so prevalent among whites and so operational in the workings of society that black people can only hope to advance through coercive programs that, in one way or another, force whites to grant them the equality they could not otherwise obtain. The perception of implacable white enmity sustains among blacks a sense of victim status that becomes an all-purpose explanatory device for analyzing the conditions of black life. I see no way for substantial progress to be made in race relations in our society until the black community disentralls itself of those ideas. It would seem to be in its own best interests to do so.

There exist millions of black people today whose problems and possibilities can no longer be defined within the old categories of poverty, oppression, and powerlessness. The black community is not a monolith, and it seems politically self-defeating for it to act as if it were. Is it not possible for civil-rights organizations to maintain their commitment to those within the black community who have not made it and yet begin to address themselves as well to the concerns of those who have? America is predominantly a middle-class society, and any political or social movement that does not recognize that—and act accordingly—will condemn itself to ultimate futility.

Not all black people are social victims, and a truly comprehensive black politics will have to go beyond the assumptions and stances that the theory of victimization imposes. Our history demonstrates, as in the already-noted instances of Orientals and Jews, that there is room in the interstices of American society for oppressed minority groups to make a place for themselves and begin the long ascent out of their oppressed status. Blacks, who have suffered quantitatively and

qualitatively as no other group in America has suffered, have nonetheless begun that ascent, and it is time more notice were taken of that by black and white alike.

To move out of victim status is to get beyond the mood and rhetoric of hopelessness, resentment, and comfortable (but ineffectual) moralism that can keep individuals and groups trapped in their own sense of futility. It may provide psychological comfort to dwell on charges of "racism" or "social meanness," but it would not seem to be socially very useful. (The once-searing term "racist" has been so cheapened by casual and inappropriate use that it has almost entirely lost its capacity to shock, outrage, or shame.) Only a fool would deny that prejudice still exists and still inflicts social and economic damage, but it is not the all-consuming monster it once was, and it no longer has the power it formerly had to condemn virtually all black people to lives devoid of social decency.

Black people today hold more of their fate in their own hands than ever before, which makes it

appropriate for black social critics like Thomas Sowell and Glenn Loury to emphasize internal elements of black culture rather than external elements of white attitudes in assessing the current condition of the black community. When these analysts include matters of family instability, social indiscipline, and educational unpreparedness in accounting for the economic plight of poor blacks, that is not an exercise in self-hatred; it is rather an attempt at a realistic examination of those forces within the black community itself that contribute to the agonies it endures. As Sowell in particular has suggested, it is essential that blacks transcend the current condescending understanding of minorities as being "people you feel sorry for"; such people will never be thought of, or think of themselves, as equals.

I wish there were some way to persuade people like my erstwhile black colleagues on the Indiana SAC of the truth of what I have said, but I fear that at present there is not. Which is why, for the next little while at least, I will be watching civil-rights developments from the sidelines.

Can the Media Be Reformed?

Suzanne Garment

IN THE wake of Gary Hart's withdrawal from the presidential race, the American press and its friends are as divided on a major ethical issue as they have been in a long time. Hart's candidacy, of course, was destroyed when reporters from the bumptious Miami *Herald* staked out his Washington townhouse and caught him in the company of the winsome Donna Rice. The man who had been front runner for the Democratic nomination sank without a trace, but the *Herald's* invasive reporting techniques have stirred a debate.

Some commentators have defended the newspaper, saying that a man like Hart who puts himself forward for the Presidency deserves all the poking and prodding he gets. In fact, the New York *Times*, not long after the *Herald's* caper, sent every presidential candidate a questionnaire calling for unprecedented and truly incredible amounts of personal information. The *Times* asked each candidate to waive his privacy rights; a waiver would make it possible for the press to get at various of his police files. The newspaper also asked for any medical records concerning the candidate's treatment for mental or physical disabilities and even said it wanted his permission to discuss his medical history with his physician.

Meanwhile other journalists, repelled by the *Herald's* police-type surveillance, are asking worried questions. Are journalists morally right to train their batteries of criminal-investigation techniques on people who are clearly not perpetrators of any crime? Has the press crossed a vital line in claiming the right to examine even the most private aspects of public persons' lives? Furthermore, as the *Times's* own A.M. Rosenthal put it in a recent column, "Now the love affairs, drinking habits, and sexual preferences, as we say, not just of presidential candidates but of all significant officials are news. Isn't it less logical for journalists to say their private life is their own business? Aren't they often even more influential than many officials whose private conduct is considered rele-

vant to the public?" Finally, some are posing the more general problem of how to get the press to think more seriously and systematically about these issues.

Such questions can hardly be regarded as unjustified. Yet something about all this anxious concern provokes a sigh. We have heard these complaints before. Indeed, in spite of all the changes the press has undergone during the past 150 years or so, the criticisms throughout this period have remained strikingly similar. By now the critics have about them something of the air of the plaintive, ever-rejected suitor.

This is no accident. The cry stays the same because it is never answered. What is more, the standards and principles the critics would like the press to put into daily operation are so alien to modern journalism and the forces which shape it that making contact between the two is and will remain nearly impossible.

TO SEE why this is so, the case of poor Gary Hart and the predatory press provides a good starting point. People are now exhuming and examining the various pieces of Hart's press problem. But the candidate did not really have a press problem, at least not in a fundamental sense. Instead what he had was a problem of cultural politics. Gary Hart was mowed down in a social and ideological crossfire.

The American press, we must remember, has always been more or less sensationalist toward the lives of public figures, including politicians. Early in our journalistic history came scandal-mongering motivated by factional politics. Then, in addition, we got scandal-mongering by the popular—i.e., commercial—press. Finally there appeared scandal-mongering that drew about itself the cloak of the public interest. But the phenomenon is an old one, and in many respects the press used to be more scurrilous than it is today. There were, admittedly, periods when the scandal stories were relatively sparse, but the constraining causes were less likely to be the press's internal ethical rules than factors like limits on reporting capacities and the relatively low visibility of some areas of government.

Yet another constraint emerged in the 20th century, when some parts of the prestige press devel-

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oped a new degree of complicity in the moral lapses of politicians. The tendency, certainly visible by Franklin Roosevelt's administration, reached full development in the days of John F. Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson. Sex, as long as it was kept private (that is, as long as only the insiders knew), was now out of bounds for reporting by any journalist who wanted to be thought sophisticated, cosmopolitan, and well connected. To a large extent this attitude extended to a politician's use of alcohol and drugs as well.

One can go farther: in line with the same civilized tolerance, there even appeared a tendency to minimize the importance of certain types of political corruption. In general, prestige journalists of the time did not make a fetish out of the urgent need to clean up the abomination that was Mayor Richard Daley's Cook County. Nor did they demand that Lyndon Johnson be drummed out of political office because the 1948 Texas election that put him in the Senate had been somewhat shady.

This journalistic attitude, a deviation from traditional practice, was part of a larger political configuration. During its high point in the early and mid-1960's, tolerance in matters of morals was thought to be the mark of the political liberal. By contrast, moral intolerance was viewed as the characteristic trait of the narrow-minded, witch-hunting right-winger. Press practices thus had the effect of protecting certain sorts of personal and political behavior from the wrath of the moralistic masses.

In the late 1960's and early 70's, however, things began happening in the larger political arena that changed the entire relationship between morality and ideology.

First there was Watergate, in which liberals found themselves using the idea of political morality as their chief instrument against the Right. Some would no doubt have preferred to fight Richard Nixon on straightforwardly ideological grounds, but in political warfare one uses the means at hand. Thus it came to pass in the days of Watergate that Senator Sam Ervin, constitutional literalist and long-time foe of civil rights, emerged as a liberal hero.

This was no mere oddity. Once the tool of ethical remonstrance is picked up it is hard to put it down, or even to wield it with discrimination. In the Watergate hearings, Richard Nixon's aide John Erlichman testified that if a Congressman was a drunk, it was fair game to make this fact known to his constituents. The remark was at first taken as a sign of the frighteningly low politics practiced by the Nixon crowd. But by the time Watergate was over, Erlichman's position had been institutionalized in the person of the new, improved investigative reporter. The era of ethics was upon us.

Just as central to this political revolution was the women's movement. In the mid-1960's, jour-

nalistic tolerance about the sexual habits of politicians was matched by a more general conviction among liberals that sex was good for women just as, and in the same way as, it was for men. This was—it seems an epoch ago—the heyday of the sexual revolution.

The women's movement challenged this attitude. Important movement writers argued that sex was not the realm of women's freedom but the arena of their slavery, in which dramas from rape to sexual harassment and spouse abuse were played out. Whistles from construction workers were no longer funny. Husbands cheating on their wives were no longer funny. In time, with a big assist from the appearance of AIDS, the idea of a sanctified area of personal privacy took a dive in value.

The upshot is that the majority of ordinary people, who no matter what their private behavior never did condone adultery by public figures, has now been joined by an elite that has tossed its support for the sexual revolution over the side like an old piece of ballast.

What this means for the saga of Gary Hart is that the press in the affair was acting as a megaphone for broader cultural and political trends. The press's special contribution to the process was largely negative: it offered no resistance based on ethical or professional principles of its own.

MANY observers think it is time for the press to do something about this situation—to start exerting some self-discipline and to stop being so unthinking a conduit for changing popular curiosities and prejudices. A good number of these observers produce books on the press, which are useful sometimes as analyses of the problem and sometimes as symptoms of it. One example of the current trend is *The Virtuous Journalist*, by Stephen Klaidman and Tom L. Beauchamp.* Klaidman has worked as a journalist, but both he and Beauchamp now reside professionally at Washington's Kennedy Institute of Ethics.

The two authors maintain that the press should devote much more thought to the moral and ethical implications of its behavior. But they do not believe that journalists can succeed at this task by drawing up increasingly elaborate rules to which every news story must conform, or ever more complex schedules of journalistic rights and duties. It is more fruitful, they say, to begin by recognizing that ethically sound news stories are those written by ethically sound journalists. In other words, the central ethical requirement in journalism is that journalists themselves be, as the book's title indicates, virtuous.

This means, according to the authors, that a journalist should not use the information in his possession to mislead his readers. He should present stories that are substantially complete and as

* Oxford University Press, 246 pp., \$19.95.

balanced and accurate as possible. He must take care not to use language or his discretion to make news judgments in a biased way. He must try, harder than today's journalists do, to avoid harming others unnecessarily. He must attempt to avoid being manipulated. He must be willing to correct his mistakes.

Klaidman and Beauchamp do not just state these requirements as abstract principles. They cite concrete examples and name names. They chide newspapers for giving their readers the mistaken impression in 1977 that the neutron bomb, which the Carter administration had proposed deploying in Europe, was designed to kill people while leaving buildings intact. They criticize television organizations for spreading the quite unsubstantiated reports that there were 10,000 killed and 600,000 made homeless when Israel invaded Lebanon in 1982. They lay out in detail the errors and biases of a 1981 *Washington Post* series suggesting that doctors at the National Institutes of Health were abusing their cancer patients for the sake of NIH's cancer-research experiments.

One can quibble here or there with the authors' criticisms and prescriptions, but on the whole Klaidman and Beauchamp are eminently sensible. The model journalist they describe would be a character of exemplary moderation and a boon to the public interest. A reader can be forgiven for suspecting that this same model journalist would not have many press organizations competing strenuously to offer him jobs.

IT WILL NOT do to be too cynical in these matters. Sometimes journalists of good character do indeed rise to prominence in the business. David Broder of the *Washington Post* is well-known as one such journalist. Like Klaidman and Beauchamp, Broder worries that the modern press is getting a bad name and in some respects deserves it. Broder, too, has a new book out, *Behind the Front Page*.^{*} His book, too, explores the question of what to do about press performance.

Broder, like Klaidman and Beauchamp, believes that we should address the problem by paying more attention to the process by which the news is gathered and written. As part of that examination, Broder thinks that journalists—he includes himself—should learn more from their thoughtless mistakes. He recounts the story of how the press wrongly pinned the “bumbler” label on President Gerald Ford, and tells the tale of how the journalistic community in the mid-1960's spread the myth of the “new” Nixon. He explains at length how his own newspaper permitted its competitive drive to push it into paying too much attention to “Billygate,” the scandal involving the relationship between President Carter's brother and Colonel Qaddafi of Libya, and how the mainstream press missed the rise of supply-side economics. He tells where praise and blame should

be distributed for the Janet Cooke fiasco, in which a *Washington Post* reporter won a Pulitzer Prize for a story that turned out to be fictitious, and agonizes over the dilemma of the *Post* reporter who had to decide whether to print an off-the-record anti-Semitic remark by 1984 presidential candidate Jesse Jackson.

But Broder is not just making a list of what is wrong and what is right. He has a more general purpose. He thinks that a great deal of the resentment of the press today arises because the press is opaque and defensive about what it does, even when it is doing nothing wrong.

He recognizes that journalistic organizations have good reason to be somewhat touchy about letting others see what goes on inside a newsroom or a reporter's notebook. Journalists fear that if they reveal too much about the flaws in the news-gathering and newswriting process, enemies of the press will use the information to harass news organizations with libel suits and other stratagems. Still, the result of this fear is that the press appears imperious and self-righteous, dedicated to emphasizing the mistakes others make but unwilling to do the same for itself.

Broder thinks journalists should tell more about what they are doing and admit that in their work they often confront questions to which there are no clearly correct answers, especially under deadline pressure. They should explain that such uncertainty simply cannot be eliminated from the activity of newsgathering and that they are coping as carefully as imperfect beings can. If journalists do more of this, he argues, people will be more tolerant when press accounts fall short of utter completeness.

As with Klaidman and Beauchamp, a reader can dispute particular propositions of Broder's. “Had the Founding Fathers seen,” he says, the emergence of the President's power as Communicator-in-Chief, “my guess is that they would have thought about providing checks and balances for this presidential authority. Since they did not, the press must do much of the balancing.” This remark does not exactly convey the sort of moderation that the rest of the book prescribes. But by and large Broder's is another unarguably sensible set of guidelines. A journalist with Broder's self-critical openness would think and act very much like the eminently responsible reporter described by Klaidman and Beauchamp of the Kennedy Institute of Ethics.

Klaidman and Beauchamp begin their book by quoting ironically from an earlier work of David Broder's: “It is difficult to write about ‘journalism ethics’ without sounding like a jerk.” But part of the reason it sounds jerky to talk about ethics in journalism is that modern journalism has created around itself an air of raffishness, of disrespect for conventional pieties, of reporters with a morality

^{*} Simon & Schuster, 416 pp., \$18.95.

buried so deep under their hard-boiled shells that it is invisible except in those few crises that matter. To some extent this pose has been used to evade the discussion of ethical questions, but there is no particular reason to let it determine what journalistic issues we do and do not discuss.

ACTUALLY, we who spend substantial amounts of time discussing journalistic ethics may be jerks in a deeper sense. We may be asking for virtues in the press that no significant numbers of journalists will or can ever display. We may be asking for standards in journalism that cannot be met unless journalism turns itself into a form utterly different from the one we know today. We may be sorely in need of Golda Meir's line on subjects like these: "If my grandmother had wheels, she'd be a carriage."

To see why this may be so, we can first take a look at yet another of this season's books on the press, Martin Mayer's *Making News*.^{*} Mayer, a journalist himself, tells a lot of good, detailed stories of real journalism in action. Here is one important verdict he derives from these case studies: "Intellectually, journalism is usually a trivial pursuit." In other words, it is not really a species of self-critical search after truths. It is not something thoughtful; it is an activity performed on horseback.

This is not to say that there is no such thing as good journalism or bad journalism. On the contrary, Mayer thinks that within the limits of the journalistic form it is indeed possible to distinguish better from worse, and according to those criteria he finds that journalism today is distinctly worse than it was in the years after World War II, in spite of the fact that urban newspapers have in some respects become better. The reason, he says, is television.

From the first days of the medium, as Mayer tells it, everyone knew in theory that television news was not going to consist simply of print journalism transferred wholesale to the TV screen. The technology was surely going to make some kind of difference. But only now are we discovering just how big that difference is.

The crucial new factor turned out to be the TV picture, a device that conveys some kinds of information magnificently but is absolutely useless at imparting others. For a time its effects were obscured by the legacies carried over from print and radio journalism and preserved by the big networks. But in recent years, network newscasters have faced increased competition.

"The beginning of the end of the glory days," as Mayer puts it, came when Ted Turner organized his Cable News Network in 1980. In the pre-Turner era, local TV stations had to rely almost wholly on the networks with which they were affiliated for their national news coverage. Turner gave the local affiliates a choice. The local organizations, in turn, began to give the net-

works competition in the coverage of national events and trends.

This posed a big problem for the networks. As one network news executive put it to Mayer, "What do you do with a headline service when people already know the headlines?" The network response, Mayer argues, has been "a steady loss of intellectual and moral fiber, an accelerating descent into entertainment, and a discreditable drive to making news rather than reporting it." Elsewhere he puts it more pointedly: "What makes the news professional is the instinct . . . for judging the probity of a participant's or observer's testimony and the relative saliency of its parts." TV today does not tell any story in an extended way, and "its practitioners, therefore, are not called upon to cultivate instincts of saliency." In other words, they can hardly be called newsmen.

Mayer is no press hater. He writes that the whole apparatus is worth its attendant inconvenience, if only for occasions like the *Challenger* disaster when the press really did uncover important things that otherwise would not have been revealed. More important, when Mayer asks himself the modern journalist's question, "Why do they hate us?" he arrives at an answer no more sinister than the fact that "we are outsiders." He explicates: "We don't understand what it looks like from the inside. Or if we do understand, which is worse, we don't care."

Then how should journalists respond to today's serious challenges to their ethics and competence? "Don't worry about it," he says. "Get the name spelled right, and make sure that what's on the film fairly represents what this fellow wants to say, that the world as you present it is recognizable to the people who live there, and the rest will fall more or less neatly in place. Most of the time." So journalism according to Mayer is a necessarily slapdash affair, redeemed by a few professional skills and virtues that TV practices are steadily eroding. And there is nothing much to be done about it.

The reader who has nodded in agreement with Klaidman and Beauchamp, and said yes to Broder, finishes reading the Mayer book and finds that he has arrived at the position of the rabbi in the famous joke: "You're right, too." The standards in the first two books are not morally unreasonable ones to expect journalists to meet. Mayer, though, explains why the system does not meet them and is becoming ever less likely to do so. Mayer is describing the realities.

BUT the Mayer book is nothing on the reality scale compared to the least formal of this spring's journalism books, Sam Donaldson's memoir, *Hold On, Mr. President!*[†]

^{*} Doubleday, 349 pp., \$18.95.

[†] Random House, 260 pp., \$17.95.

Sam Donaldson, White House correspondent for ABC-TV, has—well, a reputation. More precisely, he has a reputation for being rude even by journalistic standards and properly respectful of no one and nothing. On television he has become the man that millions love to hate. In person, up close during a press conference, his manner looks not one bit different. It is tempting to believe that a Donaldson book can tell us nothing except what life is like on the fringes of journalistic respectability.

But that notion about Donaldson and his role in the White House press corps is wrong. Donaldson, who like Ronald Reagan began his career as a local radio announcer, is not a bad journalist when judged by the standards of the trade. If he were, those who do not like him would have found a way to do him out of his job by now. He does not ask questions that other, more staid journalists find irrelevant or indecent. He asks what most would ask. The only difference is that he asks faster and louder.

In fact, Donaldson is a less pernicious influence than many of his colleagues. He does not cloak his motives in pretentious disguises. He is a Mayer-type journalist: he values accuracy, which is to say that he strenuously tries to avoid getting caught in a flat-out mistake, and when he makes such a mistake he has been known to apologize. "Close doesn't count in the news business," he says here, repeating the old journalist's maxim.

But the rest of the book's quotable quotes almost all deal with another topic: why journalists are justified in shooting their mouths off and making the lives of public officials miserable. Here is a sampling of quotations from Chairman Donaldson:

On public officials: "My job is to hold their feet to the fire of public accountability."

On self-restraint: "I've never met a question I didn't like." Also: "I never run out of things to ask."

On respect: "If you send me to cover a pie-baking contest on Mother's Day, I'm going to ask dear old Mom whether she used artificial sweetener in violation of the rules, and while she's at it, could I see the receipt for the apples to prove she didn't steal them."

On presidential campaigns: "The reporter who practices around-the-clock coverage comes out on top."

On self-doubt: News executives "do not pay us to stand on the White House lawn night after night and say, 'Gee, I haven't a clue as to what's going to happen here.'"

On modesty: "Call me a braggart, call me arrogant. People at ABC (and elsewhere) have called me worse. But when you need the job done on deadline, you'll call me."

Donaldson is not laying out the tenets of some grossly idiosyncratic attitude. He is giving a sampling of the real rules of modern journalism.

THIS does not mean that every journalist, from the most elevated think-piece producer at the New York *Times* to the lowliest tabloid toiler, is exactly like Donaldson. Not all journalists are literal slaves to the daily deadline: columnists and investigative reporters are just two of the types that are given more time to follow their leads and polish their sentences. Not all news organizations make their reporters think they must prove their journalistic worth by dogging the steps of some political candidate twenty-four hours a day. Not all news organizations think their only important political job is to beat up on public officials.

Still, the Donaldson rules exert their pressure all around. The deadlines are for everyone; indeed, they are part of the very definition of the journalistic craft. If a newspaper or TV station is inclined to give itself more time on a story, it must look over its shoulder at competition that is pressing hard on a daily basis. If a paper is inclined to ignore pieces of political information as private or irrelevant or just not important enough to justify the effort of gathering them, it knows that it will be ridiculed for squeamishness or lack of initiative, and that the information will almost certainly be published by someone else.

When journalists trained in an atmosphere of deadline pressures are set loose to write at greater length, they do not and cannot abandon the information-gathering devices, the style, and the habits of thought they acquired when under the daily or weekly gun. Even a journalist who has not been trained in the trade must learn many of its conventions in order to have any influence in the community of press and politics. No matter how highflown a journalistic piece, it must almost always be written on a schedule set by regular journalists or at least speak to journalists' notions about what is and is not interesting.

In regular journalism, work must be done so fast that reporters and news executives do not have time to puzzle through the ethical and prudential implications of each decision they make. They cannot subject their biases to conscious and detailed self-criticism.

Journalists can only operate under rules that do not have to be examined anew each day. The rules can be formulated so as to sound more sophisticated than Sam Donaldson's version, but in practice they come to more or less the same thing. Deviation from the rules takes time, causes strain, and carries risk. Journalistic organizations and their members will resist introducing more complex calculations.

Klaidman and Beauchamp, in their book, say journalists should think harder about the moral bases of stories, and they lay out a version of what the additional considerations should be. They do not aim to plunge journalists into an ethical morass from which no newspaper would emerge

on time. On the contrary, they give their ideas in a few basic, simple categories. Yet even their list asks too much. It is not just that its ethical precepts far exceed the performance of journalistic organizations as they exist today. More than that, it is very hard to conceive of the press being able to meet such standards, even in substantial part, in the future. The grinding and sometimes panicking pressure of time prevents journalists from thinking about these matters on a daily basis. It is also so wearing that there is not much energy left over for such talk in moments of leisure, and even less inclination to use it to transform day-to-day operations.

We can look at this dilemma as one example of the general problem of how to teach new or complicated behavior, or carry out long-term planning, in organizations under fire. Journalism poses a particularly difficult version of the problem, since journalists have to react so quickly to situations whose particular facts can be so radically diverse.

One time-honored method of dealing with this problem is through attention to the education that organization members receive before they take up their jobs. It is through this sort of basic education that values and skills become second nature, so that individuals do not have to stop and remember to take them into consideration in the middle of every crisis. Many students of the police used to think that it was almost impossible to reform them out of their street brutality, because of the fevered and hostile conditions under which they have to work. But police behavior has indeed changed, in large part because of changes in values and education in the society as a whole and, as an ultimate consequence, in police recruits themselves.

The example of the police, though, is not a very encouraging one for the case of journalism. It is hard to point to anything in the present state of our educational system that is likely to give future journalists a background of the sort necessary to stand against the powerful imperatives of the journalism business. Thus it is hard to believe that the press in the foreseeable future will be much different from what it is now—even if observers fully agree that there is a problem, and even if some changes can be worked at the margins.

The press, we must assume, will be what it has been and what it is today. The basic rules will be what they are now. The sentimentalism and the antagonism to institutions will remain. Press organizations will usually serve as transmission belts, as in the case of Gary Hart, for whatever others decree to be the reigning ideas of the moment. When the press can use changing mores to get itself more power, it will.

This is by itself no fatal thing for a democracy. What is really dangerous is not the nature of the press but the power it has come to wield over

public decisions. Television has contributed to the growth of that power, of course, because of its immediacy and the celebrity status it has given to some journalists. And some press organizations have pursued power aggressively. But press power has grown mainly through default by other institutions.

The story is a familiar one by now: weakened political parties, an attack on the legitimacy of traditional interest groups, the democratization of Congress, radical mistrust of government, the campaign to root out all connections that might constitute or lead to any conceivable conflicts of interest. If the press seems to speak in a particularly powerful and authoritative voice nowadays, it is because there is often nothing else to listen to.

WE CANNOT ask journalists to do the job of rebuilding our weakened political institutions, and it is probably unrealistic for us to ask them to make American journalism a great deal more complete, complex, or self-disciplined than it is today. But for the sake of our self-respect there are a few demands that non-journalists can and should make.

To take the most striking instance of the moment, press organizations are now directing consistently heavy moral fire against politicians and other public figures on both the Right and the Left. Officials are being accused of traditional crimes and failings like lying, adultery, and stealing from the public till. They are also getting headlines for more complicated and esoteric misdeeds, proved or alleged, like conflict of interest, nondisclosure or misleading disclosure, violating the spirit of the law, and committing the crime of conspiracy.

But we see evidence that some news organizations have no intention of applying these same moral standards to themselves. When the *New York Times* sent out its questionnaire on personal affairs to each presidential candidate, the newspaper was asserting that the right of privacy must cede to the public's right to know about essentially public matters. Yet, incredibly, the *Times* has refused to make its own questionnaire available for inspection by others.

In another example, the *Washington Post* has been filled recently with the complaint, explicit or implicit, that the public figures currently taking responsibility for the Iran-*contra* affair are not accepting blame in a wholehearted and personal enough manner. It is dizzying to read this accusation from representatives of an American press that has broken all records for defensiveness under fire, and that has in addition helped create the atmosphere in which people are forced to make highly personal confessions, sincere or not, if they want to escape being punished with special severity.

The ostentation with which the journalists

claim special moral privilege is what makes a disturbing situation intolerable. A.M. Rosenthal, in his *Times* column on the subject, got it about right: with the press in such a morally non-indulgent phase nowadays, the double standard has become newly offensive.

But Rosenthal is almost alone in making this point—not only from within the profession but even from the outside. Our national elites—public officials in particular, but also the attendant lawyers, lobbyists, publicists, and businessmen—reveal an almost universal cowardice in the face of press opinion and press demands. They speak of the press contemptuously in private. They struggle mightily to evade or manipulate the press and its rules. But it is amazingly infrequent for them to subject offending journalists to complaint, criticism, and public challenge.

Journalists of course bear the moral responsibility for whether their stories are fair or unfair. But officials and other people with an active role in political life have a responsibility of their own, which is to fight back. Nor are they so helpless or

without resources as they usually claim. They often control journalists' ease of access to information. They can resolve to let nothing pass with a hopeless sigh. They can put their complaints on the record. They can pursue reporters who have been in error. They can write, phone, and meet with editors. They can make sure others involved in a public issue know where a story was reported badly. None of these techniques works even most of the time. But many people doing many of these things frequently would amount to a small revolution.

This is a job that cannot be done by traditional press criticism, with its constant general laments over the nature of a journalistic form that is highly unlikely to get much better than it is now. Moreover, even the separate problem of press power in politics cannot be successfully addressed through appeals to journalistic high-mindedness. People in this country's public life cannot reasonably expect the press to curb its own influence in order to look out for them. They are going to have to learn to defend themselves.

Joanna Loves Jesus

A Story

Jacob Lampart

JOANNA loves Jesus. She has loved him for three weeks now, and has never been happier. The only problem is that Joanna is Jewish and her father, Rabbi Emmanuel Preshko, who heads a congregation of 300 families in the Five Towns, isn't emotionally equipped for such revelations. But he stands next to his daughter's hospital bed transfixed, silent, scared, because his wife's right thumb is pressed against his rib cage in an attempt to relay the message that she absolutely forbids him to give vent to the explosion building up inside his chest. Although his face is white, and at any moment he may begin trembling uncontrollably, the spectacle of their daughter's shattered body wrapped in bandages, tubes dangling from her bony arms, worries Roberta Preshko more than the possibility that her husband may start clutching his heart and foaming at the mouth.

When they wheeled Joanna in, no one knew if she would live or die. After flipping over three times on the West Side Highway, there wasn't much left of her Volvo, transformed into a potential two-ton Molotov cocktail. Luckily a Con Edison emergency crew, when they heard the piercing screech of wheels, dropped their tools and grabbed a ladder long enough to reach the embankment of the highway. Without questions or permission, they managed to extract the bleeding driver from the squashed wreck. Joanna, of course, wasn't conscious, and when she later learned about the three Con Ed workers, she smiled quietly and knew that the men were really angels sent by Jesus because Jesus knew that by the time the Roosevelt Hospital ambulance arrived the car would have burst into flames. The crash made the *Daily News* centerfold.

"Jesus made me kosher." Joanna is quoting a boy who used to stand in the back of lecture halls before class handing out pamphlets about being born-again.

"Do you mean regular kosher or strictly kosher?" snips Joanna's younger brother, Joey.

Joey is famous in the Preshko family for listening to no one, but he knows a lot more than they think he knows. When everyone is out of the house on Sunday morning, he switches the TV channels back and forth, fascinated by Reverend Terry and Dr. Bob Schuller, or Jimmy Swaggart, sweating under the stage lights. When there's a Jewish program on TV, he feels embarrassed. Perceiving the Jews to be devoid of passion, he's afraid to ask his father the rabbi why. When Rabbi Preshko gets angry, he has a unique way of meting out punishment: the guilty party must copy at least one column from the *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, whose twenty volumes sit like a troop of guards in the Preshko living room, along with the collected works of Mordecai Kaplan, Abraham J. Heschel, and Erich Fromm.

Rabbi Preshko, biting his lips, doesn't understand what Joanna is trying to say. It's true that their home isn't exactly kosher, but then they're Reform Jews and they don't have to keep kosher like the Orthodox. He wonders what the hell Orthodoxy has to do with his daughter going out of her mind. He is watching his entire life flash in front of his eyes. If he can't teach his own daughter the truth about Judaism, what can he expect from the members of his congregation?

Finally he can't contain himself. "What are you, one of those Jews for Jesus?"

"Quiet, Manny," his wife's lips are smiling but her thumb is jabbing hard. "Save that for later when she gets out of the hospital."

"I can't wait, dammit. What the hell is going on here? One day my daughter is fine, and the next day she's in Roosevelt Hospital spouting about Jesus."

"Daddy, I'm fine."

"You're fine? Then tell me what the hell has gotten into you?" He wonders how he will ever survive this. His daughter has been through transcendental meditation, Rajneesh, bio-energetics, macrobiotics, Zen, and who knows what else, but Jesus is the last straw.

Rabbi Preshko bends down to speak in a quiet

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voice. "Joanna, tell me what happened to you? Are you under some kind of spell?"

"No, Daddy, I'm not under any spell." Joanna flinches as she hears the word. Where should she begin? Her chronology of that night is blurred. The man she loved heart and soul—a teacher of film at the NYU Adult Institute—turned suddenly poisonous and not only demanded back the keys to his apartment but threatened to call the campus police if Joanna ever showed up in one of his classes again. When she got into her car, sobbing hysterically, she drove with no concern for the speed limit, and the West Side Highway on a wet foggy night is no place to say good-bye to fifty-five.

She suspects her father knows about Leonard Glass—he's practically famous—but she doesn't want to bring up ancient history. For the first time in her life she feels happy, kind, good, and hopeful. Her pain is almost delicious precisely because it's what brought her to Jesus.

Although not too familiar with the fine points of her new belief system, she knows that being a Christian is merely the fulfilled part of being a Jew, but even with all her new-found courage, she's not quite ready to put it in those terms to her father. He would never understand that she feels Jewish and Christian at the same time. She barely understands it herself. She wonders if it means she will no longer be able to sit at her parents' Passover table. Although she was never crazy about the seder, she doesn't want to cut herself off from everything. She has no idea what Christianity has to say about Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. Is it a no-no, or could she squeeze it in? All she knows about Jesus is what the night attendant told her. The attendant comes from Jamaica or Grenada or Barbados and while watching her one night Joanna could have sworn a white halo embraced the crown of the black woman's head. When she later walked over to Joanna, a Bible clutched in her hands, and respectfully asked if the young lady wanted to pray, Joanna felt a quiver of electricity upon touching the leather volume.

Actually, the woman prayed for all the sick and wounded brought into her ward, but she was particularly taken with this fragile creature, her face nothing but bone and shadow, resembling photographs she had once seen of concentration-camp survivors. She wondered if the child might be Jewish despite her Italian-sounding name.

Mrs. Amanda Williams prayed so hard to move heaven and earth to heal poor Joanna Preshko that tears began to roll down her cheeks. Joanna, who had never seen anyone, certainly not a stranger, cry for her, felt as if she were basking in a different kind of light, and a sweet glow passed from Mrs. Williams to Joanna, particularly when she read passages from the New Testament, which seemed to Joanna achingly

familiar, as if all of her life she'd been waiting for the melodies of archaic English.

Since then, Mrs. Williams has made rapid progress. Beneath Joanna's covers there are now a pocket-sized edition of the Bible (Old and New Testaments), printed in tiny letters, and tracts and broadsides from Jews for Jesus, American Mission to the Jews, and Christians and Hebrews. How will Rabbi Preshko ever be able to convince his daughter to abandon all that she's discovered about Jews and Jesus and Christians? What can he possibly say to her to match the idea of a lord and savior?

"Joanna, can you hear me?"

"Manny, I don't think this is the right time."

"Why not?"

Mrs. Preshko glances toward the doorway—visitors have arrived for the patient in the next bed. They come in carrying an expensive bouquet of jonquils, forget-me-nots, and peach blossoms, and wake the elderly woman from her sleep to show it to her. Everyone smiles at both patients, and both patients smile back. Even Rabbi Preshko smiles. The new visitors peck the old woman on the cheek and smile again at Joanna, and Joanna smiles back as if nothing in the world had ever made her happier than being Mrs. O'Rourke's roommate in Roosevelt Hospital.

Not wanting to discuss family matters in front of strangers, Rabbi Preshko goes out to the hall in search of a phone. He calls his secretary and she reads him a list of messages which he pretends to take down. Most of the names are unfamiliar, which is not surprising; Rabbi Preshko is involved with half-a-dozen major Jewish committees, and it's no easy matter to keep up with them. The one person he should call back, though, is Davidov, his editor at Menorah Books, but with Joanna saying the things she's saying, that call had better wait. Davidov is editing a new series of thirty self-portraits of American rabbis—ten for each denomination—and Rabbi Preshko has been chosen to be one of them. The offer has raised his stock considerably, but for what? So he can include a chapter on Joanna's Jesus trip?

The rabbi pulls out a cigarette, but can't find a smoking lounge, so he settles for one of the stalls in the men's room where his eyes are assaulted by graffiti. One would think that in a hospital, where life is already so close to the perilous edge, the obsession with sex and violence would abate, but no—the graffiti here could have come straight from the New York subway. Rabbi Preshko, whose job brings him to hospitals maybe a dozen times a week, never fails to be surprised at the paradox of finding this kind of language in a building where life hangs by a thread. He wonders if sex had anything to do with his daughter's conversion. Could she have fallen in love with a Jesus freak who twisted her mind around?

"No smoking allowed."

The starched white trousers and scruffy white shoes of a hospital attendant appear beneath the door, and the rabbi quickly drowns his cigarette, listening to the hiss of water entering the ember. With nothing else to do in the bathroom, it seems reasonable to get up and leave, but he's not sure what he can accomplish back in Joanna's room, so he sits waiting, lost in thought, afraid.

JOANNA's father can't fall asleep. Without air conditioning, whose hum disturbs his wife, he sweats like a kid after two hours of serious ballplaying. It's the end of July, a rabbi's slow season, and most of the members of his congregation are on vacation. He knows that if he closed down the synagogue until the High Holy Days it wouldn't really matter to anyone.

Emmanuel Preshko came to the rabbinate late in life, though people assume because of his biblical first name that he was destined for it from the day of his circumcision. In fact, history had been his first love, combining the excitement of fiction with the lure of reality, and he'd stumbled on the rabbinate more or less by accident. A graduate student at Columbia, he'd gone looking for a course on Jews in the Renaissance (he'd always wondered if his name had Italian roots) and been directed to the nearby Jewish Theological Seminary. Soon he made an interesting discovery: he could teach history from the front of a classroom, and see it reduced to dates and chalk marks on a blackboard; or he could teach from a pulpit and be involved in a living process.

To the surprise of his nonobservant father who'd once played on the starting basketball team at City College, young Emmanuel made good on his name. He finished his rabbinical training at Hebrew Union College (Reform Judaism seemed to allow a rabbi more independence than the Conservative movement did) and, after just one appointment in the provinces, was offered his present pulpit. Up until now, his greatest disappointment in life was that his wife, a cantor's daughter from upstate New York, was really anti-religious, and had married him—so he theorized—not so much out of love for the young Reform rabbi, but as a slap in the face of her Orthodox, Yiddish-speaking father, a simple man who never ceased to be amazed that people paid him to sing on days when he went to the synagogue anyhow. But this sorrow paled beside his daughter's delirium.

THE rabbi gets out of bed and goes into Joanna's room where he paces the floor and runs his fingers over the spines of her sprawling book collection—hundreds, it seems like thousands, of them. She was always a loner, a very private child who was hard to control and excessively temperamental. In his eyes, however, his daughter

is beautiful, painfully so. Unlike the other Preshkos, she has long lean limbs, and deep haunted eyes like the most expensive black olives—Jesus's sister, he thinks sacrilegiously. He's been spending long hours in her room lately, sitting at her desk, touching the sheets of her bed, looking for an answer to the question of how to get her back, and going back over his life to see where he'd failed: were there things he'd said that she'd misinterpreted, and things he didn't say that he should have said? Would it be different if he'd stayed on at the Seminary instead of opting for the easier road of Reform? Had he made a mistake in the first place leaving the world of the academy for the more dangerous world of the rabbinate? There are no guarantees in life, but if he hadn't dressed his own historical yearnings in a religious mantle, isn't it likely that his daughter, who's obviously committing the ultimate act of rebellion against a rabbi-father, wouldn't be flirting with the other side now? As for himself, once the news gets out, he doubts if his career can survive the slings and stares. In effect, he'll become a lame-duck rabbi.

To make matters worse, there seems to be no escape from the problem. Whenever he turns on his car radio, all he seems to get are stations selling Jesus. There's no end to it. Wherever he drives there are bumper stickers crying, "Repent," and "I'm Going to Heaven, Are You?," and "He Died for Your Sins." It makes no sense to him. How could anybody die for the sins of anybody else? What does it mean? A person commits a sin, and that sin is redeemed somehow by the death of a man, nailed to a cross two thousand years before? It simply makes no logical sense to Rabbi Preshko to base a religion on this peculiar myth of crosses, sin, redemption.

Judaism is different. Everyone knows the Jews don't worship Moses, they worship God or, in more abstract terms, they worship Jewish history itself, the whole awesome curve of it. But not a person. So why is the world always hounding the Jews to switch their religion?

JOANNA's mother is impressed. Barely out of the hospital and still in bandages, her daughter has signed a lease (sight unseen) for a refurbished walkup apartment on the Lower East Side in the faith that it's "exactly what she needs."

Mrs. Preshko has been visiting Joanna on her own but now believes her husband's presence is also required if Joanna is to recover totally. Rabbi Preshko resists.

"What kind of rabbi are you, if you can't face your own daughter?"

"She's not my daughter. In case you haven't heard, Jesus is her father!"

"Manny, you have a heart of stone."

The following Sunday both parents arrive bearing gifts of raw film stock, home-made marmalade, fresh bread, organic eggs, and several gallons of

orange juice. They let themselves in through the unlocked door and are greeted by the sight of Joanna on her knees. The rabbi has a sudden memory of a foreign movie he once saw where flagellants kneel their way to one of the stations of the cross, but it turns out Joanna is only looking for an earring.

"Are you sure it's not too soon to go crawling around like that?" Mrs. Preshko asks.

"I'm fine, Mom. Four weeks is enough time for bones to heal."

So cluttered is the one-room studio flat that Joanna's editing machines and Nagra tape recorder share table space with her bean-sprout grower and an old-fashioned toaster that accepts the slices horizontally. Magazines, books, flyers, manila envelopes, stockings, and even pieces of underwear lie strewn about everywhere so that the only place to sit is an antique lilac loveseat not wide enough for both Preshkos.

The rabbi can't conceal his irritation, but his wife beams with admiration at how Joanna has managed, broken bones and all, to move into her new place. The mess, hinting at an exuberance of life, actually excites her. Not so the rabbi, whose eye falls on Joanna's first camera—an 8mm Bolex he'd been badgered into buying as a graduation gift—which now lies abandoned inside a dried-out Boston fern planter.

"How are you?" he says stiffly.

"Praise the lord," beams Joanna.

Rabbi Preshko turns white and looks at his wife.

"What did she say?"

I said, "Praise the lord, the king, the one and only," Joanna repeats.

"I have to sit down," says her father. "Is this how you're supposed to refer to him?"

"Jesus, Daddy, Jesus, say his name, the name of the lord, the savior, the only-begotten son who was born to save us from sin."

"Is this possible?" The rabbi grabs for his daughter's shoulder but she pulls away.

Mrs. Preshko's face turns green with anger. "Manny, you promised."

The rabbi ignores his wife and looks at Joanna without flinching. "Have you forgotten that you're Jewish?"

"No, Daddy, I haven't forgotten, but for the first time in my life being Jewish means something to me. I'm one of the elect, Jesus's own."

"I can't listen to this. You're torturing me."

"I'm sorry, Daddy, it's just something I've spent a lot of time thinking about lately." Joanna closes her eyes, "It says in the New Testament. . . ."

"New! Did you read the Old, too?"

"Parts of it, please don't shout."

"In Hebrew?" The rabbi's voice rises, a defense attorney for the Hebrew God.

"You know my Hebrew isn't good enough, but I'm planning to start studying Hebrew again."

"Joanna, I may not be a very smart rabbi, but I do know that if you haven't read the Bible in Hebrew then you haven't read the Bible of the Jews, what you read was the Bible of the Christians."

"I don't care whose Bible I read. Jesus is the one. It all makes such perfect sense."

"Do you know what you're doing to us? To me?"

Mrs. Preshko feels the conversation is heading down a one-way street in the wrong direction. "Does anybody want some coffee? Honey, where do you keep the coffee? We brought some marmalade and fresh rolls. . . ."

The rabbi turns on her. "Can't you wait with all that?"

"It's all right. You talk and I'll perk. We'll just sit right here and have a nice cup of coffee, unless someone prefers tea. Last call for tea."

"Mom, did you hear what I said?"

"Yes, honey, I heard every word."

"About Jesus, I mean, the greatest Jew who ever lived."

"Yes honey, if you say so, whatever you say, as long as you don't do anything crazy like you did with the car. Do you promise?"

"Mother, you're not listening to me, I'm talking about the greatest Jew who ever lived."

"Are you happy, Joanna?" Mrs. Preshko asks. "You look happy. Manny, she looks happy, doesn't she?"

"I'm the happiest I've ever been. Everything makes sense to me, my whole life, all the suffering, all the pain." It's hard for Joanna to explain but she has to let them know the truth about the New Testament, how each page speaks to her in a way that the Hebrew Bible stories have never done, so that she sees herself in the words, in the very shape of the letters. Reading Jesus's words makes her body soar, and gives her the feeling that she's being healed, and this healing is a sweet ache, like falling in love with someone new. The pages feel as soft to her as a bed of feathers, and the world she faces every day, that used to be so hostile, has suddenly assumed an air of gentleness.

THERE is a stillness in the room as Joanna describes these things. Mrs. Preshko is afraid to utter a sound, even to breathe, as Joanna concludes her monologue.

"Not only do I understand myself now, I also understand the Jewish people, Jewish history, why Jews have always suffered. Not only did the Jews give the world its law, they also gave the world its redeemer, but because the Jews were blind to Jesus, they suffered and still suffer. It's really very simple. Without Jesus, a Jew is just half a person. The laws of Moses have been superseded by the higher laws of the spiritual kingdom of Christ, and these higher laws pave the way for the messianic age which will be ushered in

upon the appearance of Jesus. They even explain Hitler, because he represented the wrath of God finally revealed at its fullest. All of that could have been avoided if only the Jews had accepted Jesus. We're being given one more chance, the final chance before the end."

The rabbi grits his teeth. "I can't listen anymore, Joanna."

"Why not, because it's the truth? You know where I was yesterday? At Grandpa's nursing home."

"You went to visit my father?"

"That's right. He's not just your father, he's my grandfather, in case you've forgotten. I had to tell him the truth. And do you know something, I think he understood. I told him to repeat after me that Jesus was the messiah, and do you know what he did? He kissed me with tears in his eyes."

"Are you out of your mind?"

"No, Daddy, I'm very much in my mind. Completely there."

"Roberta, I can't take this anymore. I'm going."

"You promised you'd come and be supportive," Mrs. Preshko pleads.

"That's impossible. My father is eighty-three years old, and the last thing he needs is a half-mad granddaughter ranting about Jesus. The man lived through a pogrom in Russia when he was seven, so why does he deserve this kind of treatment now?"

"Your father will survive, it's Joanna I'm worried about."

"I'm leaving."

"Manny, don't."

"Why not? Preaching Jesus to my father—is that normal? Come on, Joanna, where's all this Christian love I've heard so much about? And all that turning the other cheek. The only time a Christian turns the other cheek is if he has a knife stashed away in his boot."

"That's ugly, Manny. It makes you sound like an Orthodox fanatic. Why do you insist on defaming people you don't even know?"

"For Christ's sake, Roberta, what's gotten into you?"

"She's happier now. Let her be."

"Are you kidding? She's losing her mind."

Suddenly a painting of a young bearded face seems to come looming out of its frame toward Rabbi Preshko, practically knocking him over. How could he not have noticed it all this time?

"Is that who I think it is, Joanna?"

"It's beautiful, isn't it?"

"Are you turning your house into a church?"

"As a matter of fact, it's a Rembrandt reproduction. Does that make you any happier? The original is in the Met. Rembrandt used Jews living in Amsterdam as models for his religious paintings, so don't get all excited for nothing. If you don't like him as Jesus, just think of him as another Jew."

Rabbi Preshko is about to storm out when his wife stops him.

She drags her husband into the bathroom, and in a soft whisper, nearly crying, says, "I know only one thing. I want my daughter."

The rabbi puts his arms around his wife. "I understand, I really do. But if she's tied up with Jesus, she's not yours."

"Manny, she's ours. She'll always be ours. This is just one more of her phases, and if we make a big stink, she may really start taking herself seriously. Let's just forget about it."

Joanna sticks her head through the door with a final message: "I think you should know that I'm planning a long trip soon to the Holy Land."

Mrs. Preshko's eyes light up. "Did you hear that, Manny? Joanna wants to visit Israel. Isn't that wonderful?"

"Not exactly Israel, Mother, but the Holy Land. Bethlehem, the Mount of Olives, Nazareth. I want to spend Christmas on the Via Dolorosa. Not in Eilat, and I'm certainly not stepping into Tel Aviv."

"Joanna, do you know what you're talking about?" Rabbi Preshko asks.

"Yes, Daddy, I know exactly what I'm talking about. Christmas, December 25th, in the Holy Land. I think it would be a wonderful way to meet Jesus in the flesh, so to speak, on the very earth where he once walked."

"I'm leaving. I can't take this anymore."

THE image of his daughter in Jerusalem, retracing Jesus's steps, is so frightening, the rabbi has no words, no thoughts. All he wants to do right now is forget about Jesus for a few hours. Yet when he walks out the door, Rabbi Preshko finds himself on a bus heading uptown toward the Metropolitan Museum of Art, in pursuit of Joanna's Rembrandt.

Arriving at the museum, he makes his way straight to the permanent exhibits of the Italian and Dutch masters. Joanna's Rembrandt is not there, but the rabbi has no inclination to leave, and he stands gazing for a long time at ten centuries of Jesus. From one painting to the next, it is almost as though he can watch Jesus growing up from a primitive iconic presence to a martyr crowned with thorns, from a simple teacher surrounded by his students to a subtle mystic, from a man alone on a mountaintop to an angry critic casting out the moneychangers from the Temple.

Finally he comes to a huge El Greco which seems to sum up the essence of Jesus through the centuries; the eyes have the gaze of sainthood, of one who knows, but won't say, one who never gets angry, one whose hands have never hurt another willfully. Was he a good son? The best. Did he do his homework when young? Always. Did he help old people cross the street? Certainly. Did he lust after women? Not on your life.

Did he put on *tefillin*? Every day. And say grace after meals? Of course.

In the midst of these thoughts, Rabbi Preshko feels a stab of hunger. On his way to the cafeteria, he stops off at the art shop where, without too much trouble, he finds the portrait he's been looking for reproduced on a postcard. Then, sipping coffee and munching on a croissant in the museum cafeteria, he studies the postcard and tries to imagine who the model might have been in real life—probably a Sephardi Jew whose family had fled the Inquisition. And was he paid anything for his services, or did Rembrandt tell the young man that this wasn't merely a painting, but also an ironic comment on history? To facilitate the worship of Jesus, even Rembrandt must come to the Jews. The American rabbi sits there, amazed, realizing that what half the world sees when it stands in adoration before Rembrandt's paintings of Jesus is actually a portrait gallery of Amsterdam Jews.

When he leaves the museum, the sky is so blue, Rabbi Preshko feels he could be swallowed alive, and wouldn't mind. Even the clouds, unusually white and vivid, have a razor-sharp reality, each one perfectly composed. For the first time in his life Rabbi Emmanuel Preshko wonders if he's having a mystical experience. But before he knows it, he's brought back to Fifth Avenue by the inevitable hustle of city traffic, teeth of steel and rubber eating their way through the tough flesh of New York taxis and buses.

AS THE weeks go by, Rabbi Preshko grows more and more distant from his wife. He stays up until all hours, devouring everything he can on the history of early Christianity and its Gnostic roots, as well as anything he can find on "Hebrew Christians." He plows through the small print of Bultmann and Dibelius, rereads Buber and Klausner, and even goes wading into Catholic encyclopedias. In addition he discovers late-night gospel shows and becomes fascinated, wondering if this is where Joanna first developed a taste for Jesus. (He keeps the set turned down so Joey can't hear.) Watching one night as a new convert gyrates across the screen, then breaks down in tears—while scores of people in the audience follow his example—he wonders why in all his years as a rabbi he's never seen a worshipper cry.

He feels moved by the spectacle of such simple faith, reflecting a world so different from the horrors depicted every day in the newspapers—like the crazy item he'd come across just the other day about a club of necrophiliacs in Manhattan. With real corpses brought in from the Bowery (or maybe even killed for the purpose)! With that kind of thing going on in the city, is it surprising that people should be drawn to something that looks as clean and innocent as the TV gospel preachers? Rabbi Preshko is worried. If

a rabbi can see something positive in the gospel according to Channel 11, then what about Jews in the rest of the country?

THE next time he finds himself inside his temple chapel, he shuts his eyes and tries to peer into his heart, but all he can see is Jimmy Swaggart swaying in front of the Ark where the Torah scrolls are kept, and he realizes that his own heart is like a museum, frozen and dusty, and that everything in this place is a lie.

For a moment he loses track of time, and of who he's supposed to be. He can't even remember if it's before the High Holy Days or after. But what does it matter? As long as the members cough up what they pledged last Yom Kippur night, that's all the board really cares about. Would they even care if his daughter started worshipping in the Holy Trinity church around the corner?

As he keeps thinking he realizes that he may have been waiting for something like this to happen for years. When he looks into his heart again, he fears that he doesn't love his family, not his wife and not even his children. Maybe he doesn't really care about Judaism, either, or about what's happening to the Jews here in America.

Are their lives any different from the lives of other Americans? Maybe Jews aren't practicing Christians, but they might as well be. Most of them work or go shopping on Saturday and rest on Sunday, and they're a lot stricter about observing Christian and American holidays than Jewish ones. So why shouldn't his daughter, when she found herself yearning for religion, have been drawn to the religion that so many Jews in America really live by beneath their Jewish façade?

In his own generation there was still some sort of link with the past—a nostalgia for the old neighborhood, a memory of what an authentic Jew looked like—but what kind of choices did his daughter have available to her? Just the tepid, passionless Judaism with which she'd grown up, served up by a rabbi-father who'd never been able to achieve the living dialogue between history and religion that he had once aimed for.

Suddenly it's clear to Rabbi Preshko that Joanna went mad with Jesus not just for her own sake but to jolt her father out of his sleep. It's not just Joanna reaching out to Jesus, but the rabbi himself, although he could never admit it. And since he could never have accepted such ideas as emerging from his own being, he must in some unconscious way have pushed Joanna toward the brink, toward the car accident that nearly killed her. At this moment he understands two things: he loves Joanna more than anyone else in the world, and no matter what she does, he will never withdraw his love from her. He also realizes that some day he will have to walk into a

church and read from the Christian Bible, not as a scholar but as an ordinary person seeing with his own eyes what it's all about.

RABBI PRESHKO couldn't have picked a more appropriate time for his travail. It seems that only yesterday was Columbus Day, and—after a lonely, brooding Thanksgiving—here it is already the second week in December. Joanna has gone off on her four-week tour of the holy sites, and from the moment he hears of her departure the rabbi can no longer sit still in his office. Even as she's tracing Jesus's footsteps in the Holy Land, he begins to trace her footsteps in Manhattan, and discovers a town in the throes of feverish preparation. Wherever he turns, he collides with Christmas, blinded by the colors, bitten by the wind, wet from the slush, knocked against by packages, importuned by the Salvation Army, assailed at every corner by the incessant ringing of bells.

What is Christmas? he wonders. Is it a religious festival or a national holiday? What can it mean to the Jews of America when the most festive day of the most festive season of the year—a time of gifts and good cheer, and reconciliation throughout the land—excludes them from its embrace? He knows that most members of his congregation have Christmas trees in their homes, but who can blame them for wanting to be a part of the world they live in, day after day, night after night? Do most of America's Jews, despite the theoretical separation of church and state, really live in some sense like Marranos in their business suits and leisure suits, swinging their golf clubs and flashing their credit cards in this great free land? Do they take part in the seasonal cheer and good will because they enjoy it or because they're afraid or unable to live separately from the rest?

Rabbi Preshko is aware that he's writing his sermon for next week, and that it will be a good sermon, and one which might even move a few people to burn their Christmas trees before New Year's. But he doubts if he'll ever deliver it.

THE next Saturday, the portion of the Torah is *Vayishlach*, with its famous tale of Jacob's all-night wrestling match with a stranger, perhaps an angel, who before releasing Jacob wounds him in the thigh. Ostensibly the story has nothing to do with December or Christmas, but as Rabbi Preshko stands in front of his congregation and begins to discuss the significance

of Jacob's wound, he finds himself talking about latter-day Jacobs, and before he knows it the subject has switched to Marranos in Spain, Christianity in Portugal, the Inquisition.

The shift doesn't surprise his listeners, they've heard him introduced often as a "Ph.D. in history, from a very prestigious university." But soon his calm lecturer's voice begins trembling and grows jittery and scratched, like a violin string being twisted. In this new voice he begins to speak of Christmas trees and Santa Claus, launching into an attack on the Marrano Jews of America. There's a stunned silence in the audience, a sense of shock. Rabbi Preshko doesn't sound like a Ph.D. any longer. He sounds like some sort of preacher, one of those terrible rural preachers who act as if they know all the answers.

"We are guilty, you and I, all of us. It's a sham, this religion, how we practice it. And if you think I'm not talking about personal experience, you're wrong. I haven't been able to talk about this to anyone, but my own daughter, Joanna—many of you know her, NYU Film Institute—has become a born-again Christian."

Rabbi Preshko is in tears. "I'm sorry for putting you through my own personal sorrow from this pulpit, but history has come home. There's a price to pay. A good Sabbath to you."

AT THE end of the service, Rabbi Preshko does not follow his usual custom of joining the temple president at the rear of the synagogue to greet the worshippers. Instead he slips out the back way, and without consulting his wife, hands in his resignation. He's not sure what he'll do with his life, but supposes he'll be able to land a job teaching history somewhere. It's only three mouths to feed now.

But the congregation won't accept Rabbi Preshko's resignation, and instead the board votes a lifetime contract for him. In the end, Rabbi Preshko accepts. His sermons are events. He becomes a more distant man, but at the same time the congregants feel that his suffering is good for them. Although they've never realized it before, they really do want a rabbi who can also preach and carry his audience toward a rip-roaring climax. Every year on the Sabbath before December 25th, Rabbi Preshko dedicates his sermon to Joanna, praying that one day she will return to the fold, to Jewish history, and he will look up from his notes to see her black olive eyes staring at him from the audience, her heart open, willing to believe that he loves her very much.

The Pornography Report That Never Was

Terry Teachout

THE catalogue of Rutledge Hill Press, a small publishing house located in Nashville, Tennessee, is a modest but evocative eight-page booklet which serves as a useful reminder that the publishing business in America is a good deal more democratic than is often supposed. "Founded in 1982 to publish quality books of Southern interest," reads the back page, "Rutledge Hill Press is quickly becoming one of the country's leading regional presses." Twenty-nine different titles are listed in the current catalogue, ranging from *Georgia Trivia* to *Chosen Exile: The Life and Times of Septima Sexta Middleton Rutledge, American Cultural Pioneer*. The house's all-time top seller is a volume called *The Original Tennessee Homecoming Cookbook*.

This record, however, is about to be broken by Rutledge Hill's latest offering, a chunky 571-page paperback bound in fire-engine red, stamped with a blue eagle, and bearing the nondescript title *Final Report of the Attorney General's Commission on Pornography*.^{*} This book, the trade edition of the Meese Commission's 1986 report on pornography, is now in its second edition, with sales of 65,000 at last count. Since the average nonfiction book sells anywhere from 2,000 to 18,000 copies, with the latter considered a very good sale, the performance of *Final Report of the Attorney General's Commission on Pornography* is quite respectable.

The achievement of Rutledge Hill Press in distributing the report becomes even more impressive when one considers that most of these copies have been sold by mail, the chain bookstores having elected for all intents and purposes not to carry the Meese Commission report. (Waldenbooks ordered a total of 250 copies for its thousand-store chain.) The book is being sold in bulk to a number of fundamentalist religious groups. Cardinals Krol and O'Connor are distributing copies to all the priests and parochial-school principals in their respective archdioceses. The Evangelical Book Club has ordered a special hard-bound edition for distribution to its members. Profits from package deals like this add up quickly, and any book which can sell so well without

the assistance of the chain bookstores is clearly a gold mine for its publisher.

Rutledge Hill is unquestionably in possession of such a mine—by default. For the major publishers, it seems, were and are simply not interested in the report. This is not a question of exclusivity; the market has hardly been saturated. The Government Printing Office sold only 5,000 copies of the original two-volume version (the official report on the *Challenger* disaster sold 30,000), and government reports are not copyrighted. Anyone can publish his own edition of *Final Report of the Attorney General's Commission on Pornography* for the cost of printing and distribution. No one but Rutledge Hill Press has done so to date. What is going on?

PART of the answer lies in the remarkably bad press which the Meese Commission report received on the occasion of its initial release last July. Most news stories emphasized the fact that the report contained actual samples of pornography, including several highly explicit synopses of pornographic movies, among them *Deep Throat* and *Debbie Does Dallas*, and a 107-page list of over 5,000 pornographic books, movies, and magazines. Some people found the presence of this material in an official government report to be offensive, others merely absurd. But nearly everyone agreed that it was at the very least wildly inappropriate.

Reaction to the report itself was more predictable. The American Civil Liberties Union called it "a national crusade against dirty pictures." NBC *Nightly News* carried a story consisting of exactly three sentences on the report proper, plus brief reactions from Edwin Meese and the chairman of the commission and longer comments from three critics, among them Christie Hefner of *Playboy*. *Time* brought out a sniggering cover story entitled "Sex Busters." A dismissive *New Republic* editorial bore the scornful headline "Big Boobs." Michael Kinsley, writing in the *Wall Street Journal*, called the report "wildly funny." And the inevitable New York *Times* editorial blamed the commissioners for "relying on questionable evidence and recklessly encouraging cen-

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^{*} With an introduction by Michael J. McManus, 571 pp., \$9.95 (paper).

sorship" and concluded that the report "outruns its own evidence . . . its cure of censorship is worse than the disease."

The most detailed presentation of the case against the Meese Commission report on pornography, however, can be found in a paperback book, *United States of America vs. Sex: How the Meese Commission Lied about Pornography*.^{*} This book, written by two editors of the popular sex magazine *Forum* and published in a mass-market edition of 106,000 copies, attempts to expose "the right-wing tilt and the methodological madness" of the commission. One may derive some idea of the book's overall tone from its opening paragraphs:

On the morning of April 29, 1986, in a government annex building in Washington, D.C., 11 carefully chosen advisers to the United States Justice Department debated the pros and cons of a lesbian-orgy movie.

"Does it make any difference if the camera is five feet away or three inches away from a lady's vagina?" an ex-sheriff wondered.

"Can such a film depict truly loving, mutual, and consensual sex?" a jittery law professor asked.

The seven men and four women soon moved on to other pressing topics.

"I've got a couple of questions about bestiality," said a former aide to Richard Nixon. . . .

After ten months on the job, the Attorney General's Commission on Pornography—the F Troop of the Erogenous Zone—was still wandering in the briar patch of the bizarre during its climactic deliberations.

According to the authors of *United States of America vs. Sex*, an earlier government report, that of the 1970 Presidential Commission on Obscenity and Pornography, which recommended that the sale of pornography to consenting adults be legalized, had led to a backlash among right-wing ideologues, radical feminists, and religious fundamentalists. Ronald Reagan, acting at the behest of these groups and making use of the twin pretexts of child pornography and a growing body of research literature purporting to demonstrate the psychologically harmful effects of violent pornography, called for the Justice Department to charter a new commission whose specific brief, the authors claim, would be "to reverse history by overturning the not-guilty verdict of 1970."

Rather than assembling a balanced panel of authorities from "the sex and civil-liberties establishments," the Justice Department "talked, instead, to priests, child-abuse experts, evangelists, and criminologists" in order to assemble an "all-white, middle-aged, upper-class, and presumably heterosexual citizens' council" chaired by one Henry E. Hudson, Commonwealth Attorney of Arlington County, Virginia, "a superstar among a tiny band of smut-busting commissars dotting the nation" and "an erotic illiterate" who had "never read *Ulysses*, *Lolita*, or *Lady Chatterley's Lover*." A group, in short, on which "Ed Meese could bet

his badge" and which came through with flying colors:

Current obscenity laws permit suppression of material simply because it is offensive. The Meese Commission wanted to go further by showing that dirty pictures are demonstrably harmful, and it relied on anecdotes, not science, to make the case. . . . The Justice Department invited the commissioners to a hanging. An army of vice cops, zealous D.A.'s, worked-up clergymen, man-hating feminists, and anonymous "victims" brought the rope.

Thus, *United States of America vs. Sex*. As it turned out, however, even the Attorney General was a bit skittish at his commission's findings. When presented with the report last July 9, he said that he had not yet had the time to read it and would offer his response in "two to four weeks." A full three months later, Meese finally got around to endorsing the commission's 92 recommendations, calling for pornography peddlers to be "pursued with a vengeance and prosecuted to the hilt." These remarks received scanty press coverage, and no further comment on the report has been heard from the Justice Department since last October.

ALL things considered, it is not hard to see why nobody much wanted to bring out a trade edition of the report. Still, Michael J. McManus, a syndicated religion columnist who covered the Meese Commission's hearings, canvassed "every major publisher in New York." No one was interested, although one house told McManus that if he could guarantee an advance sale of 100,000 copies, it would bring out a trade edition. McManus produced the commitments, but the publisher backed down. When the *Boston Globe* subsequently contacted seven major houses that had been approached by McManus and asked why they had decided against a trade edition, five of the seven declined to comment. A spokesman for Howard Kaminsky of Random House told the *Globe* that Kaminsky thought the report "was too large and had already found its audience" through sales of the official edition. And a spokesman for Bantam Books later succumbed to a fit of candor and told the *New York Times*: "We felt we would not be terribly comfortable promulgating that report, since many people here and in the industry have reservations about it."

Lawrence M. Stone, president of Rutledge Hill Press, felt otherwise. "The report has been widely praised and condemned," he says, "but very few people actually know what it says. We thought it deserved to be read and debated." A good point, given the all-too-obvious fact that while the *Final Report of the Attorney General's Commission on Pornography* has already been extensively de-

^{*} By Philip Nobile and Eric Nadler, Minotaur, 370 pp., \$3.95 (paper).

bated, it has hardly been read at all. The only reporters other than Michael McManus who covered the hearings in any depth were sent by *Playboy*, *Penthouse*, and *Forum*. Everyone else shrugged off the commission and its work until the release of the report, which ran to 1,960 pages in the original. Most reporters and other observers, as we have seen, focused on trivial details in an attempt to avoid grappling with the unwieldy whole. Even *United States of America vs. Sex*, which was rushed into print two months after the release of the report, is based chiefly on *Forum's* continuing coverage of the commission hearings rather than on a detailed look at the report itself.

The degree to which the Meese Commission's report has gone unread is reminiscent of the way in which Justices William O. Douglas and Hugo L. Black used to handle the Warren Court's regular screenings of stag films which had been submitted as evidence in obscenity cases. Having previously arrived at the conclusion that such films were constitutionally protected, regardless of their content, the Justices declined to attend. Similarly, anyone who feels that the issue of free speech was settled for all time when Congress ratified the First Amendment need not read a word of the *Final Report of the Attorney General's Commission on Pornography*. For such a person, the case is already closed. Anyone with a less doctrinaire view, though, would do well to give careful consideration to the many interesting things the Meese Commission report has to say about the problem of obscenity—and the even more interesting things about which the report is silent.

THE natural starting point for the Meese Commission was the work of its predecessor, the 1970 President's Commission on Obscenity and Pornography. To be sure, the commissioners claim that their efforts were not intended to be "reactive to the work of others sixteen years earlier." The earlier pornography commission, they say, "provided much important information for us," but since then "there have been numerous changes in the social, political, legal, cultural, and religious portrait of the United States, and many of these changes have undeniably involved both sexuality and the public portrayal of sexuality."

The first of these changes was brought about by the Warren Court. The 1970 pornography report was written at the end of a lengthy series of decisions dealing with free speech and obscenity which began with *Roth v. United States* in 1957, the decision that inaugurated active Supreme Court scrutiny of obscenity, and ended with *Memoirs v. Massachusetts* in 1966, in which the Court ruled that pornography had to be "utterly without redeeming social value" in order to be subject to regulation under the obscenity laws.* The effect of these decisions was to create a climate in which, in the words of the Meese Commission

report, "obscenity regulation became essentially dormant, with a consequent proliferation of the open availability of quite explicit materials."

Given the newly permissive attitude of the courts toward the regulation of obscenity, the report of the 1970 commission, which asserted that pornography was harmless, served to liberalize national attitudes not only toward "hard-core" pornography but also toward the presentation of explicit sexual material in movies, on television, and in magazines like *Playboy*. Such subsequent court decisions as *Miller v. California*, which reversed the "utterly-without-redeeming-social-value" test in favor of a more restrictive test based on "community standards," had no significant effect on the availability of obscene material, the authorities having decided after *Memoirs* that it was simply not worth their while to try to prosecute pornographers.

As the climate of tolerance softened, technological changes, particularly the growing availability of cable television and videocassette recorders, made it more feasible to distribute pornography on a mass-market basis. The legal impediments to such distribution having been de facto neutralized by *Memoirs v. Massachusetts*,

in virtually every medium, from books to magazines to newspapers to music to radio to network television to cable television, matters relating to sex are [now] discussed, described, and depicted with a frankness and an explicitness of detail that has accelerated dramatically within a comparatively short period of time.

But what made these developments worthy of the scrutiny of a second panel of experts? The 1970 commission, after all, found no evidence that pornography "plays a significant role in the causation of delinquent or criminal behavior" and thus concluded that the government had no compelling interest in regulating its sale to consenting adults. Nor does the 1986 report specifically contradict these findings. Instead, it claims that "materials . . . available today are more sexually explicit and portray more violence than those available before 1970." This claim is central to the Meese Commission's argument that, the findings of the 1970 commission notwithstanding, pornography *does* do harm, not merely to its consumers but to women as a class.

The staff of the Meese Commission conducted an extensive review of the post-1970 social-science literature dealing with the effects of pornography consumption. With regard to "material featuring actual or unmistakably simulated or unmistakably threatened violence presented in sexually explicit

* The Meese Commission report distinguishes between pornographic material, which is "predominantly sexually explicit and intended primarily for the purpose of sexual arousal," and obscene material, which is pornography that "has been or would likely be found to be obscene in the context of a judicial proceeding employing applicable legal and constitutional standards."

fashion with a predominant focus on the sexually explicit violence"—that is, the kind of pornography for which "the scientific findings and ultimate conclusions of the 1970 commission are least reliable for today, precisely because material of this variety was largely absent from that commission's inquiries"—the commissioners found that

when clinical and experimental research has focused particularly on sexually violent material, the conclusions have been virtually unanimous. In both clinical and experimental settings, exposure to sexually violent materials has indicated an increase in the likelihood of aggression . . . [and] a causal relationship between exposure to material of this type and aggressive behavior toward women.

The commission also found that "substantial exposure" to nonviolent pornography depicting "degradation, domination, subordination, and humiliation" is likely to

increase the extent to which those exposed will view rape or other forms of sexual violence as less serious than they otherwise would have, will view the victims of rape and other forms of sexual violence as significantly more responsible, and will view the offenders as significantly less responsible.

Although the commissioners were unable to agree on whether or not milder types of pornography caused harm, they felt that the harm caused by violent and degrading pornography was sufficient to justify the serious attention of law-enforcement officials and the public at large. The Supreme Court having consistently held that the First Amendment permits the regulation of obscenity by the state, and having enunciated in *Miller* a clear and coherent test of whether or not pornographic material is obscene, the Meese Commission rejected the recommendations for decriminalization advanced by the 1970 commission and offered instead 92 recommendations aimed at restricting the sale and distribution of obscene material.

Many of these recommendations seek to close various legal loopholes available to pornographers; others exhort federal, state, and local officials to start taking enforcement of the obscenity laws seriously. ("The Attorney General should direct the United States Attorneys to examine the obscenity problem in their respective districts, identify offenders, initiate investigations, and begin prosecuting them without delay.") And the commissioners also called for one major departure from existing obscenity law. They recommended that legislatures "conduct hearings and consider legislation recognizing a civil remedy for harm attributable to pornography," arguing that

pornography, when it leads to coerced viewing, contributes to an assault, is defamatory, or is actively trafficked in, constitutes a practice of discrimination on the basis of sex. Any legal

protections which currently exist for such practices are inconsistent with contemporary notions of individual equality.

If this reasoning has a familiar ring, it is because the commissioners lifted it from the model anti-pornography ordinance drafted by the radical feminists Andrea Dworkin and Catherine MacKinnon, which asserts that "pornography lowers the social standards of treatment of women as a class," declares certain types of pornography to be sexually discriminatory *per se*, and provides women with civil remedies against those who make, distribute, and sell such pornography. While the Dworkin-MacKinnon ordinance was struck down as unconstitutional two years ago, on the grounds that the specified definition of pornography was inadmissibly broad, the commission suggests that it could be redrafted so as to make it consistent with *Miller*.

This emphasis on *Miller* is characteristic of the Meese Commission's recommendations, none of which attempts to "restrict materials not currently subject to restriction under *Miller*." The commissioners did not, in other words, try to widen the present constitutional definition of pornography. They found that existing laws are for the most part already flexible enough to permit more than adequate leeway for officials to suppress obscene material. ("At present," one witness testified, "the city of Cincinnati has no adult bookstores, no X-rated movies, no massage parlors, no adult movies on cable television, and no go-go dancers." That such a thing should be possible in 1987 is likely to strike a resident of New York as nothing short of miraculous.) Improved enforcement rather than new obscenity legislation, then, is the gravamen of the Meese Commission.

IMPROVED enforcement—but not censorship. "One of the myths perpetuated by those who have not read the report," Henry Hudson says, "is that the report is promotive of censorship. A reading of it would indicate the contrary." Indeed, to read the report in its entirety is to be struck by the degree to which it diverges from the portrait drawn by its critics. The frenzied puritanism so vividly described by the authors of *United States of America vs. Sex* is simply not present in the cool, bland rhetoric of the Meese Commission's report.

If censorship is defined as the prior restraint of publication of obscene materials, then the Meese Commission is plainly not advocating censorship. Nevertheless, this is precisely what its critics accuse it of doing, and not merely the elite media and the editors of magazines like *Playboy* and *Forum* but also (in the words of *United States of America vs. Sex*) "several of America's most accomplished writers." These writers communicated with the Meese Commission at the urging of a group called the National Coalition Against Censorship. John Updike's letter is typical:

Since around 1960 . . . American writers have been free to attempt sexual realism—to describe sexual events and transactions between people in as much detail as seems appropriate, in the language that people actually use. Please do not take this freedom from us, or from artists of any kind, or from those therapists and scientists who wish to address in printed form the subject of sexuality. . . . I deplore any abridgment of our First Amendment rights as presently interpreted.

Updike's last sentence is, of course, the heart of the matter. The First Amendment, which provides that "Congress shall make no law . . . abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press," is the wolfbane which opponents of censorship invariably thrust in the face of anyone who dares to suggest that the state has the right to regulate the sale and distribution of pornography. Indeed, the First Amendment is plastered like a secular talisman on the back cover of *United States of America vs. Sex*, whose authors almost certainly do not realize that the arguments of the Meese Commission actually have more in common with their own position on obscenity law than with the views of, among others, the Framers of the American Constitution.

That the state is constitutionally competent to censor obscene material was taken for granted throughout most of this country's history. "One looks in vain," as Walter Berns has noted, "for a discussion of the problem of vulgar speech or of obscenity in the records of the Constitutional Convention of 1787 or in *The Federalist Papers* or in the debates in the First Congress on the First Amendment." The question of whether or not the First Amendment applies to pornography, in fact, did not even reach the Supreme Court until 1957 and the case of *Roth v. United States*.

The real significance of *Roth* is not to be found in its long-superseded "prurient interest" definition of obscenity. It lies in the fact that a previously unquestioned assumption—that obscene material is not protected by the First Amendment—was now felt to require argument before the highest court in the land. Which is why the truly influential opinion in *Roth* was not the majority opinion of Justice Brennan but the dissent of Justice Douglas. "The First Amendment," Douglas wrote, "its prohibition in terms absolute, was designed to preclude courts as well as legislatures from weighing the values of speech against silence. The First Amendment puts free speech in the preferred position." With this dissent, Douglas introduced into the field of obscenity law the doctrine which has come to be known as "First Amendment absolutism," the notion that the First Amendment is to be read literally, divorced from any consideration of the intent of its Framers, as estopping the federal government from passing any law abridging freedom of speech or of the press.

Douglas's reading of the First Amendment was

absurd on its face, as dozens of scholars of constitutional law have demonstrated over and over again since 1957. The Framers of the First Amendment never intended that it be interpreted "absolutely." Moreover, the doctrine of First Amendment absolutism has never commanded a majority on the Supreme Court, which has consistently held, even in *Memoirs*, that obscene material can legitimately be suppressed by the state. But one well-worded dissent can be more influential than a dozen pedestrian majority opinions. And Justice Douglas's dissent was not only well-worded but well-timed. For the doctrine of First Amendment absolutism meshed perfectly with increasingly forceful attacks from the American political Center against the regulation of obscene material, and it gave the Center a constitutional hook on which to hang its opposition to obscenity law.

THE consequences of this twin assault on the fundamental premises of obscenity law were baleful. The Supreme Court, whatever its claims to the contrary, has always been responsive to social and political pressure. Given the growing pressure to liberalize obscenity law, it hardly came as a surprise when the Warren Court gradually began to narrow the constitutional grounds on which the state could act against pornography. Constitutional law, after all, is "positive" in much the same way that markets are "efficient." Once the basic legal and cultural assumptions which restrain the courts from considering the constitutionality of a given issue are seen as vulnerable to attack, the forces of judicial reductionism and caprice are unleashed and all bets are off. In a very real sense, Justice Douglas's dissent in *Roth* made possible the Court's later decision in *Memoirs v. Massachusetts*.

What is most disturbing about *Memoirs* is the relative absence of any serious public challenge to the wisdom of the Court's findings on obscenity law.* The American public, after all, was by no means convinced of the wisdom of completely deregulating obscene material. But the Supreme Court had already endorsed the general premise that at least *some* pornography was deserving of First Amendment protection, and the American political Center, desiring to make it possible for readers to buy *Ulysses*, *Lolita*, and *Lady Chatterley's Lover* over the counter and for novelists like John Updike to publish "realistic" portrayals of sexual behavior, had gladly accepted the far more extreme arguments of Douglas and Black.

* The American Right, of course, was outraged by the Warren Court's obscenity decisions from the very beginning. But this outrage never resulted in a sustained public campaign aimed at the specific question of obscenity law—the kind of campaign that has lately been directed, for instance, at *Roe v. Wade*. In any event, conservatives have become increasingly divided in recent years over the question of pornography. The influential libertarian wing of the conservative movement, for example, does not believe in the regulation of pornography at all.

Memoirs did not make the problem of obscenity go away. Most people continued to believe that the open distribution of obscene materials was in some indefinable sense socially undesirable. But when the Supreme Court extended the protection of the First Amendment to certain types of pornography, the ability of the state to justify any obscenity laws was irreversibly compromised. And when the 1970 commission announced that pornography was harmless, the Center was left with no grounds whatsoever for controlling the flood of obscenity which subsequently inundated American society.

THE Warren Court "proved" that there was no such thing as obscenity. The 1970 pornography commission "proved" that pornography was not harmful. But while the public largely took both conclusions at face value, it was still not satisfied. Anti-pornography sentiment continued to run high. Thus it was inevitable, given the collapse of the obscenity laws, that a new attack would be mounted on pornography, couched in terms of the only line of argument left standing by the First Amendment absolutists: that the social-science evidence gathered by the 1970 commission was defective and that pornography was harmful after all. This is the line taken by the Meese Commission.

The use of social-science evidence in a legal context is itself yet another pernicious legacy of the Warren Court. In footnote 11 of *Brown v. Board of Education*, the decision which most completely embodies the modern triumph of judicial activism over judicial restraint, the Supreme Court offered social-science evidence in support of its case against segregated schools. Lower courts have been hastening ever since to buttress their distortions of original intent with "scientific" evidence. It was only natural that this approach would eventually be adapted to the needs of the foes of pornography.

The use of social-science evidence in the fight against pornography did not originate with the Meese Commission but with radical feminists; it can be dated roughly to the publication in 1980 of the book *Take Back the Night: Women on Pornography*. Some conservatives, to be sure, had shied away from the feminist critique of pornography, recognizing that to make common cause with feminism in the name of a supposed common good was to venture onto extremely dangerous ideological ground. But others did not hesitate to ally with the radical feminists, who were, after all, the only group in possession of a coherent vocabulary of opposition to pornography. (Liberals and moderates, although by now convinced of the disastrous effects of the liberalization of obscenity law, had long since been silenced by their ill-considered acceptance of First Amendment absolutism.) The Meese Commission, as we have seen, was among the latter group; it made a point of siding with the radical feminists, claiming that pornog-

raphy both degraded women and encouraged sexual violence in men, and extensively citing social-science evidence to prove its contention.

The problems with this line of attack are manifold. To begin with, it is based on the obnoxious ideology of radical feminism. ("Anything that puts me in bed with Andrea Dworkin," as one libertarian says, "has got to be wrong.") Moreover, the legal remedies it implies are transparently unconstitutional, based as they are on the premise that pornography harms women as a class rather than on the constitutionally firmer foundation of discrete and tangible harm to individual litigants. It is highly unlikely that a Supreme Court which earlier this year rejected a constitutional challenge to the death penalty based on a statistical study purporting to show racial bias in Georgia executions would seriously entertain, say, an attempt to widen the scope of *Miller* based solely on social-science evidence bearing on the supposed harm caused by pornography.

At any rate, those familiar with the standards of "proof" that currently prevail in the social sciences must cringe at the thought that the Supreme Court might seriously weigh the findings of social scientists in arriving at judgments on any subject whatsoever. The social sciences are notoriously soft, and their practitioners are in many cases just as notoriously willing to allow their methodology and interpretations to be shaped by the compelling interests of ideology. In order to recognize this fact, one need only consider the way in which the scholarly debate over bias in mental testing has been perverted by advocates of affirmative action and racial-hiring quotas.

WHAT we have, then, in the Meese Commission report is a document whose authors are unwilling to risk criticism by appearing to advocate censorship. This is a report which seemingly can find no better reason to condemn pornography than the shaky evidence of social-science research. Most importantly, it is a report undertaken at the express request of an administration which has consistently honored social issues more in the breach than in the observance. Surely nothing could be more characteristic of Ronald Reagan's handling of controversial issues than for him to choose to address the question of pornography by instructing the Attorney General to appoint a commission to study the problem instead of going directly to the public and explaining why obscenity ought to be banned.

All of which suggests that the critics of the Meese Commission report have in some basic sense missed the point. To charge, for example, that Attorney General Meese "stacked" the commission in order to produce a desired conclusion is absurd. It seems equally likely that the Meese Commission was stacked so as to produce a report that could be filed and forgotten. How else to explain the remarkable diffidence of its condemnation of pornography? As Whittaker Chambers said

of Russell Kirk's *The Conservative Mind*: "If you were a marine in a landing boat, would you wade up the seabeach at Tarawa for *that* conservative position?"

A pornography commission "stacked" so as to produce a genuinely conservative result, in any event, would have been composed of other sorts of people than psychologists and social workers and obscure jurists. Such a commission would not have allowed the judicial Left to set its agenda. It would not have relied on social-science evidence to make the case against obscenity. It would not have rooted its arguments against pornography in the shifting, positivistic grounds of current theories of constitutional interpretation. And it would never have gone to such elaborate pains to avoid using the word "censorship."

Such a commission, by contrast, would have boldly asserted the obligation of the state to censor obscene material. ("If you care for the quality of life in our American democracy," Irving Kristol has written, "then you have to be for censorship.") And it would have argued that any interpretation of the Constitution which spreads the mantle of the First Amendment over books like *Anal Agony* and *Hot Cock Nazi Masters* (to cite but two titles from the Meese Commission's long list) not only is historically specious but necessarily weakens the foundations of the good society which the Framers intended to secure. The pornography report such a commission would have submitted to the Attorney General of the United States might well have led to a major rethinking of American cultural attitudes toward obscenity. But that is the pornography report which does not exist.

MEANWHILE, the pornography report which *does* exist continues to make its circuitous way into the living rooms of thousands of troubled families, most of them fundamentalists, evangelical Christians, or conservative Catholics. These readers are not interested in the Meese Commission's careful chronicling of the evolution of obscenity law, hair-splitting qualifications, and endless footnotes. Many of them are frankly revolted by the contents of the report. (Most Christian bookstores will not stock the report because of the explicit material it contains.) But they are reading it all the same, because they are deeply concerned about the spread of pornography, and they are growing angrier by the minute.

The Meese Commission's scruples about recommending censorship are meaningless to these readers. Censorship, after all, is precisely what they want—and not the "liberal," nonrepressive censorship of an Irving Kristol, either. They want to see censorship boards exercising prior restraint over the release of movies and the publication of books. Were these readers of the Meese Commission report to have their way, the United States would quickly be returned to a long-forgotten time when it was not possible to buy books like *Ulysses*,

Lolita, and *Lady Chatterley's Lover* over the counter.

Anyone who doubts that such a thing could come to pass in our enlightened age should consider the following cautionary tale. The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has said that it intends to crack down on "obscene" and "indecent" broadcast speech. WBAI-FM, a New York radio station of a decidedly left-wing bent, sent the FCC a letter announcing its intent to broadcast a lengthy series of words and phrases, the mildest of which was "kissing my bottom." The station invited the FCC's reaction, which was immediately forthcoming and unhesitatingly negative. Lawyers for WBAI-FM thereupon revealed, no doubt with poorly suppressed glee, that the "obscene" and "indecent" words and phrases in question were all drawn from Molly Bloom's soliloquy in *Ulysses*, which the station was planning to air, as it always does, on June 16, known to all Joyce scholars as Bloomsday. One commissioner retorted that even if those words and phrases had come from *Ulysses*, they were still "stuff you deck someone over. I'm amazed it made it as a classic."

This kind of talk is alarming. But in the absence of a more sophisticated opposition to the First Amendment absolutism that now dominates legal discussion of the obscenity problem, what real choice is there but to accept the arguments of the extremists, whether of Left or Right? "Democracy," Walter Berns says, "can live without Mrs. Warren's Profession, if it must, as well as without Fanny Hill." If it is necessary to trade *Ulysses*, *Lolita*, and *Lady Chatterley's Lover* for a world free of Times Squares and child pornography, what principled person would hesitate to choose the latter?

Needless to say, the choice is an invidious one. Reasonable alternatives *are* possible, even in the difficult area of constitutional interpretation. The unyielding opposition of the American public to the *Miranda* decision, for example, finally led the Supreme Court to undertake a revaluation of the Warren Court's positions on questions of criminal law, a revaluation which brought about, to consider only the most immediate example, the recent Supreme Court ruling affirming the constitutionality of preventive detention. The existing situation with respect to pornography is by no means irreversible.

But it is foolish to underestimate the possibility that extremism may prevail in the absence of reasonable alternatives. The United States, lest we forget, once ratified a constitutional amendment banning the sale of alcohol. It might conceivably some day choose to ratify a constitutional amendment banning the sale of literature portraying sexual activity. If Americans want to preserve their right to buy the novels of John Updike at the local Waldenbooks outlet, they must first accept the civic obligation of finding a morally responsible *via media* between First Amendment absolutism and prior restraint.

Liberalism & the Hebrew Prophets

Jerold S. Auerbach

IT HAS long been an article of faith among American Jews that their political liberalism expresses traditional Jewish values. A commitment to the rule of law (the legacy of Torah), reinforced by a passion for social justice (inherited from the Hebrew Prophets), defines "the biblical heritage of American democracy."

Liberalism, however, is not an expression of the biblical tradition, but an alternative to it. Jews who rejected the authority of Torah, but wanted to remain attached to Judaism, reformulated the biblical heritage to assure its compatibility with Enlightenment values and liberal politics. Enter the Prophets.

Hebrew prophecy was rediscovered in the 19th century by Christian Bible scholars and Reform rabbis who, for their own doctrinal purposes, moderated Jewish "legalism" with prophetic "justice." Liberated from the constraints of tribe, cult, and sacred law, the Prophets were hailed as the founders of a universal religion of moral idealism and ethical monotheism (which bore a remarkable resemblance to liberal Protestantism and Reform Judaism). Julius Wellhausen, whose religious history of ancient Israel was the inspirational source of modern biblical scholarship, described with unrestrained admiration the volcanic force of prophecy as it burst through encrusted religious institutions that were "fixed and dead." The Prophets conveyed an ethical message that "destroyed the national character of the old religion" of Israel (and culminated in

the religious truth of Christianity). For that "progressive step" in religious evolution, Wellhausen lavished upon them the highest praise that the son of a Lutheran minister could bestow: they had launched "the Prophetic Reformation."

American Reform rabbis of the late 19th century had a different agenda. Their rejection of Mosaic law enabled them to frame "a Judaism congenial to the free soil of America." In the "Holy Land of Freedom and Human Rights," explained Rabbi Kaufmann Kohler, the intellectual leader of Reform, "it will not do for us . . . to remain Hebrews in garb and custom, in views and language." As appropriate as Mosaic law might have been for "a childish and semi-barbarous nation," it was deficient by the only standard that Reform acknowledged: "modern enlightenment and progress." For Judaism to blend with freedom it must relinquish "the yoke of mere *legality*" and embrace the universal truths of prophecy. These, paradoxically, enabled Jews to become "truly American."

By the turn of this century prophecy, wrenched from historical context and stripped of Jewish content, defined the appropriate faith for a secular age. Since then, the prophetic voice, once the conscience of biblical Israel, has been heard on behalf of "progressive" political causes ranging from Marxian socialism to democratic liberalism. The most conspicuous spokesmen for American liberal reform, Jews and Christians alike, have cited the Hebrew Prophets to frame their indictments of social ills. From Louis Brandeis to Lyndon Johnson, from Rabbi Stephen S. Wise to the Reverend Martin Luther King,

Jr., the words of Isaiah and Jeremiah have resounded in an American vernacular. We are told that Jews especially have learned from the Prophets that it is "un-Jewish not to be preoccupied with freedom and justice for everyone." Liberalism is still good for the Jews, according to the conventional wisdom, because liberal values express fidelity to prophetic ideals.

AS TEMPTING as it has been to transform the Hebrew Prophets into Reform rabbis (or Protestant ministers), radical socialists, New Deal liberals, or social democrats, such retrospective projections should be resisted. Jewish sources and texts locate prophecy precisely within the sacred-law tradition. At a time of supreme national crisis in the life of the First Commonwealth, the Prophets passionately proclaimed themselves God's messengers to Israel, bringing the divine word to remind Israel of its covenantal obligations. They fervently defended the national religion and the sacred legal foundation upon which it rested.

The Bible makes explicit the normative Jewish understanding of prophecy. We learn in 2 Kings that late in the 8th century B.C.E., during Hoshea's rule over the Northern Kingdom, the monarch "did evil in the sight of the Lord," and the people "feared other gods, and walked in the statutes of the nations." So God sent prophets to warn them, saying: "Turn from your evil ways, and keep My commandments and My statutes, according to all the Torah which I commanded your fathers, and which I sent to you by My servants the prophets" (2 Kings 17:2,8,13-14). The book of Deuteronomy draws precise distinctions between true and false prophecy based solely upon the fidelity of the prophetic message to divine law. The true prophet was like Moses, conveying God's word to Israel.

The rabbis of the Talmud reiterated and strengthened biblical

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teachings. The opening sentence of the tractate *Abot* securely linked the Prophets to the sacred-law tradition: the Torah received by Moses was transmitted by him to Joshua, then to the Elders, to the Prophets, to the Men of the Great Synagogue, and, ultimately, to the rabbis. Biblical prophecy, concluding with Malachi's admonition to remember the statutes and judgments of Torah, was rabbinically interpreted as a reminder that his prophetic predecessors had come to strengthen the Torah, not to change it.

Given Christian claims that the Prophets, anticipating Jesus, had preached a new faith that culminated in Christianity, it was all the more imperative for the rabbis to blunt any innovative potential in prophecy. (And, to be sure, anyone claiming to bear a special message from God posed a direct challenge to rabbinical authority.) But prophetic morality, as the rabbis well knew, was inseparable from Torah morality. For precisely that reason the unity of law and prophecy retains its centrality in the synagogue service today. The link between them is not the attraction of opposites. Rather, it is an associative connection demonstrating the unity of God's word to Israel: two voices conveying the single message of covenantal obligation.

PROPHETIC demands for justice must be located within the covenantal faith. God's children "rebelled against me," lamented Isaiah, whose prophecy concluded with a demand for covenantal loyalty and obedience (Isaiah 1:2). God wanted "loyal love" from Israel, Hosea pleaded; instead, Israel had "transgressed" the covenant (Hosea 6:6,8:2). Jeremiah cried out in the streets of Jerusalem: "Hear the words of this covenant, and do them" (Jeremiah 11:6). Ezekiel, foretelling the return from Babylonian exile, relayed God's intention "to put My spirit within you, and cause you to follow My statutes" (Ezekiel 36:27-8).

These admonitions hardly were novel obligations thrust upon Israel. They conveyed some of its most ancient sanctions against oppression of the poor, mistreatment

of the disadvantaged, and perversions of justice. They can be found, repeatedly, in Exodus, Leviticus, and Deuteronomy. Indeed, it is extremely difficult (if at all possible) to locate any prophetic accusation that is independent of Mosaic legislation. The Prophets knew the sacred law, cited it, and demanded obedience to it. With covenantal fidelity as their standard, they infused their indictments with legal metaphors. Isaiah, Micah, Jeremiah, and Hosea all proclaimed God's "controversy" with Israel. Appropriately, God took His people to court for breach of covenant. In these divine lawsuits, the Prophets acted as God's prosecuting attorneys. They indicted, tried, and convicted Israel before the bench of divine judgment for its legal transgressions. The Prophets, as one Bible scholar has observed, spoke "like lawyers quoting the law."

But surely, modern liberals insist, the Prophets stood for the rejection of cultic ritual in favor of individual morality, the repudiation of religious law for social justice, and the replacement of parochial nationalism with universal brotherhood (if not sisterhood). Outside Christian sources, however, there is little evidence to justify that claim. Although it was long an axiom of Bible scholarship that the Prophets superseded the priestly cult, ushering in the triumph of right over rite, this tidy evolutionary progression toward liberal Protestantism cannot be sustained. Both priest and prophet were entrusted with the task of teaching Torah. The Prophets complained, loudly, that the priests had elevated ritual above ethics, but they did not question the centrality of the cult or the Temple.

Given their attachment to the sacred law, it should come as no surprise that several of the classical Prophets maintained a close relationship to the priestly caste, to cultic ritual, and to the Temple. Isaiah was inspired to prophesy when an angel touched his lips with a burning coal, a familiar cultic purification ritual. Jeremiah explicitly identified himself with the priestly tradition and prophesied within the Temple grounds. The Prophets in exile, Ezekiel (a priest) and

Deutero-Isaiah, held out the vision of national redemption and a rebuilt Temple to the "deaf" and "blind" Jews in *galut*. Haggai and Zechariah, after the return from Babylonia, were vigorous advocates of cultic regeneration centered upon the holy sanctuary. It is hardly coincidental that the prophetic era closed with the rebuilding of the Temple.

THE prophetic demand for justice is incomprehensible outside the context of the sacred law. Biblical *mishpat*, so frequently and inadequately translated as "justice," never was a standard external to law. At its broadest (as when Abraham, confronting God's intention to demolish Sodom, asked: "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do *mishpat*?" [Genesis 18:26]), it imposed upon God the obligation to make right judgments. More often it had a precise legal focus, as in the Covenant Code of Exodus, where *mishpatim* referred to the legal commands that God imposed upon Israel. Elsewhere, it meant a law that is just, or the right judgments of judges. *Mishpat* conveys the obligation to conform to God's just ordinances. "The ways of the Lord are right," Hosea reminded Israel, "and the just do walk in them" (Hosea 14:10).

The meaning of justice, in biblical Israel, was conformity to divine law. There could be no conflict (of the kind that torments liberal legal thought) between law and justice, because law emanated from a just God. The stringent requirement that Israel do justice—a requirement of Mosaic law no less than of prophecy—was the stipulation that Israel abide faithfully by the legal norms of the covenant. The idea that morality or justice might be independent of the "knowledge of God" (Hosea 4:1) was inconceivable to the Prophets who, after all, rested their claim to authority entirely upon divine command.

Finally, there is the familiar assertion that the Prophets broke the shackles of the parochial national religion to proclaim a new universal moral order. But prophetic universalism, as the Bible scholar Yehezkel Kaufmann wrote, was "al-

ways connected with the glorification of Israel, Jerusalem, and the Temple. . . . All of prophetic universalism is suffused with national symbols." Even Isaiah's majestic anticipation of the end of days, when all nations would come to the mountain of the Lord, and "out of Zion shall go forth Torah and the word of God from Jerusalem" (Isaiah 2:3), is strikingly particularistic, which explains why Jews still recite it during the Torah service.

The exilic experience vividly illuminates the impulse behind prophetic "universalism." The exiled community in Babylonia confronted a tormenting problem: "How shall we sing the Lord's song in a foreign land?" (Psalms 137:4). Hidden within the Psalmist's lament was an anxious question: had God accompanied Israel into exile or, once vacating the territorial boundaries of the promised land, had Israel left God behind? Anticipating a massive crisis of faith, Deutero-Isaiah offered reassurance that the divine reach, truly universal in scope, embraced His children even in the remote outpost of Babylonia. The Prophet brought God to the exiled community, proclaiming the divine message: "Look to me, and be saved, all the ends of the earth" (Isaiah 45:22). He reminded the people of God's unbounded presence, and of their own undiminished obligation to obey the revealed law.

How ironic that prophecy has captured a far more receptive audience in the modern era than it ever did in ancient Israel, where (except for the rebuilding of the Temple) its impact was negligible. But the attentiveness of Jewish liberals to the prophetic message may only suggest that they hear in prophecy what they want to hear, irrespective of what the Prophets said. In fact, the prophetic "tradition" of social

justice and universalism (divorced from divine command) is barely a century old. That "tradition" can best be understood as part of the Jewish response to the terms of the emancipation bargain set in the Christian West: individual rights and civil equality in return for abandonment of the national religion of Judaism. Just as Jews conformed to Christian standards of dress, dietary preference, decorum, calendar observance, and religious ritual, so they reshaped their sacred-law tradition to conform to Enlightenment values. Hebrew prophecy provided a bridge, built in large measure by Christian exegetes, that Jews crossed in their exodus from the national religion to enlightened liberalism.

For Jews eager to acculturate, but unwilling to jettison their Jewish identity, prophecy eased their entry into Christian society. Severed from the particularism of the national religion, grafted to Christian theological precepts or to secular liberal politics, prophecy symbolized Jewish enlightenment. To Reform rabbis, the Prophets represented reason, progress, and American patriotism. To radical socialists the Prophets were nascent Marxists, denouncing class exploitation and proclaiming universal brotherhood. To political liberals they remain social-justice advocates, favoring the right (Left) side of any issue on the current political agenda. Prophecy, in its time a desperate cry to return to the ancient faith—"Ask for the old paths, where the good way is" (Jeremiah 6:16)—has become, in our time, an exit from the faith.

Prophecy has served as a passport to modernity—and not only for American Jews. Secular Zionists in Israel associated their state-building efforts with prophecy; not, of course, as a measure of their fidelity to the word of God but to justify their break with religious Judaism.

David Ben-Gurion, presenting his first government to the Knesset, echoed Israel's Declaration of Independence, declaring: "Our activities and policy are guided . . . by a political and social vision that we have inherited from our Prophets." He hardly meant to imply that Israel was dedicated to the word of God, to the covenant, or to the sacred law. But secular Zionists (like their liberal American counterparts) still reflexively cite the Prophets as political allies, ironically in their struggle against the very conception of the sacred law that the Prophets so passionately defended.

It is a measure of their powerful eloquence that the Prophets became so available to all faiths in every political season. But irrespective of the varied uses to which prophecy has been put, history also has its claims. This is no mere fundamentalist exercise, akin to the effort of constitutionalists to discover in the "original intent" of the American Founding Fathers those simple truths which might restore the golden age of republican virtue. Secular liberals may make of prophecy what they will; and their imaginative transmutations provide fascinating insights into the changing sources of legitimation, both political and religious, for modern Jews. But the temptation to trim prophecy to current liberal fashion may only reflect modern anxieties, which require the reformulation of the Jewish tradition in contemporary terms. To recover the full impact of the prophetic message requires intellectual and spiritual resources that modern liberalism may not possess. Without them, however, it cannot recapture that delicate balance between faith and hope, order and change, divine command and human choice, which the classical unity of law and prophecy preserves.

Why Europeans Support the Sandinistas

Mark Falcoff

IN THE preface to *When the Going Was Good* (1946), a selection from his travel books written in the 1920's and 30's, Evelyn Waugh wrote, without much regret, that his own traveling days were over:

Never again, I suppose, shall we land on foreign soil with a letter of credit and passport . . . and feel the world wide open before us. . . . Others, not I, gifted with the art of pleasing public authorities may get themselves despatched abroad to promote "Cultural Relations." . . . I shall not, by my own wish, be among them.

I suddenly recalled this passage when I was invited by the United States Information Agency (USIA) to visit six Western European countries this past May to explain our Central American policy. Apparently I had been gifted "with the art of pleasing public authorities," and had to bear the consequences. I knew, of course, that Central America was a subject Europeans did not wish to dwell upon at any length; I knew, also, that most countries were critical of our policies, and some downright sympathetic to our enemies. I had heard of the vast "solidarity" movements which, particularly in West Germany, Holland, and the Scandinavian countries, had sprung up to assist the Sandinistas in their task of Stalinizing Nicaraguan society; but I had heard, too, that the tide was beginning to turn, as the Ortega brothers and Tomás Borge revealed their true colors. Perhaps this was an opportune moment to restate our case?

The following reflections are taken from a journal of the trip.

Helsinki, April 27-30

THIS is the city often used to represent Leningrad in Western spy

films—and no wonder: it is full of architecture evocative of the late Russian empire, and seems cold, bleak, and properly Baltic. (I realize for the first time that Tallin—formerly Reval—Estonia is just forty miles across the water, Leningrad a mere train ride away.)

Finns are known to be a reserved, introspective people, but the ones I meet—the very few who are interested in Central America—are voluble enough. Here the issue of Nicaragua is played in two different ways. Either the Sandinistas are confused with Nicaragua ("big country versus small country"), in which case Finland, as a small country, must side with any other small country threatened by a large imperialistic neighbor (in this case, the United States); or the Sandinistas represent one area where Finnish "neutrality" can show its tilt toward the Soviets at low cost and risk.

In any event, there is abundant activity here on behalf of the Sandinistas. As the Press and Public Affairs Counselor at the U.S. embassy explained to me in a letter before my arrival, "Recently, there has been pressure on the Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs' Department of Development Cooperation to increase development assistance to Nicaragua. A group of 28 Finnish organizations, including student, union, and church groups, also requested that a group of Finnish peace-corps types be sent to help out." Surprisingly, he added, "*La Prensa* has been represented in the journalists' union house organ (controlled by leftists) as a U.S.-financed paper which stands for reaction, opposes the revolution, and, therefore, does not represent freedom of information but rather an obstacle in the way of progress in Nicaragua. No media voices were raised here against its closing."*

During my four days here I have ample opportunity to learn that these observations are not exagger-

ated. The Finns are basically where the American liberals were about 1982, still hopeful that the Nicaraguan revolution could somehow justify their support, but with the anti-American cutting edge a bit sharper (or possibly merely more explicit). Perhaps the most appalling moment of the visit comes when a young labor leader looks me straight in the eye and says, "The Nicaraguan elections were quite convincing, don't you think?" I manage to respond, "Well, what do your friends in the Nicaraguan labor movement think of them?" "Well," he says a bit uncomfortably in answer to this unexpected riposte, "it is a rather confused situation." When I suggest that the AFL-CIO thought otherwise, he just smirks.

Why a country which has lost so much territory to the Soviet Union should view Nicaraguan affairs in this light is rather difficult to say. Actually, Finland is not "Finlandized" at all; that is, though formally neutral, in most ways it is unambiguously pro-Western—which is not to be confused, however, with being pro-American. The Finns are also deeply anti-Soviet. (A member of parliament says to me, when I remark on the proximity of Leningrad, "Well, yes, that's so. I've never been there, of course." The "of course" is the operative part of the sentence.) What makes Nicaragua a cause worthy of Finnish support, then, is not its desire to be part of the Soviet bloc, or even the Sandinistas' supposedly revolutionary achievements at home, but the regime's opposition to the United States. This does not offer us much in the way of constructive suggestions for future policy, except perhaps that we should reduce our national territory by 90 percent and declare ourselves non-aligned vis-à-vis, say, Canada.

Rome-Vatican City-Trieste-Naples, May 1-9

THE nice thing about Italy—apart from the food, the wine, the weath-

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* See "How *La Prensa* Was Silenced," by Jaime Chamorro, in the January 1987 COMMENTARY—Ed.

er, the scenery, and the people—is the political diversity and forthrightness of all parties. This is one of the few countries anywhere where you see wall slogans like SOVIETS OUT OF AFGHANISTAN. Also, when someone applies the slogan VIVA NICARAGUA SANDINISTA he thoughtfully adds a hammer and sickle. Such candor is refreshing; at least we all know what we're talking about.

Latin realism has its charms. The Italians are a cynical people—they have a right to be, given their history—and I find few ardent Sandinista sympathizers. Even the Socialists, who have their own problems with Communists, are beginning to ask hard questions about Nicaragua. At the Foreign Ministry the senior official in charge of political relations with Latin America is mainly interested in learning more about the mess in Washington; clearly, the baroque convolutions of Congress and the administration (the Iran-*contra* affair) make our country seem more exotic (and more difficult to understand) than any banana republic. (A mostly undressed Donna Rice is currently adorning the front pages of all the Italian papers; one has as its headline "SIGNORINA RICE SAYS GARY HART IS 'TOO OLD.'")

At the Vatican I meet with two groups—a class at the Pontifical Lateran University and a group of Jesuits at the Gregorian University across town. The former are a polyglot group from the four corners of the globe, including a disenchanting Salvadoran and two Africans, one of whom wants only to discuss South Africa, while the other is mainly interested in practicing, for what I imagine is at least the seventy-ninth time, his maiden speech (in French) for some future UN General Assembly.

The Jesuits are a mixed bag, representing all political points of view. The most leftward by far is an American who has just returned from twenty years of service in the Philippines. He doesn't know much about Nicaragua, but he has little admiration for our foreign policy generally, extrapolating from what he believes to be our record in the Philippines. "There the last thing in the world we had in mind was the welfare of the

Filipino people," he repeatedly insists. "That's why we supported Marcos to the end."

Now, I too have read the newspapers, and I think this version somewhat at variance with the facts. Was Ambassador Stephen Bosworth's evident preference for Mrs. Aquino not a matter of public knowledge? Who was it that finally got Marcos out, anyway, if not Senator Paul Laxalt? And so forth. Pressing the matter further, I force him into an undignified retreat. But the feelings are still there—my country, wrong or wrong—and nothing will ever make him part with them. He will not lack kindred spirits when he eventually returns home.

TRIESTE is a city which knows something of Communism; it is literally in sight of Yugoslavia, whose soldiers occupied the city in 1945 and killed some 40,000 people. Yugoslavs still come to Trieste nowadays to buy little necessities like soap, toothpaste, toilet paper, hangers, and so forth. I remark to the local USIA representative, a passionate Triestino intellectual, that for many people I know—leftist "community organizers" in the United States, Socialists in Spain, Christian Democrats in Chile—Yugoslavia is the *ideal* Communist country, a social experiment worthy of emulation everywhere. He is astounded. "That is no Communist country!" he insists. I say, "Really, then what would you call it?" "It is a country of corruption, nepotism, where everyone hates everyone. . . ." In other words, the Yugoslavs are a form of animal life too low to aspire to coherent political institutions. I permit myself to doubt this.

Trieste is also a city which reminds one, eloquently, of Europe's troubled history, and the price which is still being paid for the folly of World War I. It mutely attests, as well, to the permanent damage done to Western civilization by the pernicious ideas of Woodrow Wilson. Once the port of the Austro-Hungarian empire and the home of its fleet, Trieste was ceded to Italy in 1919. In many ways it is closer to Vienna than Rome, and not just geographically, though the language is Italian. It

seems a bit of *alt-Mitteuropa* pinned in a remote corner of the Adriatic, separated by distance and culture from its nominal parent state, and by accidents of diplomacy and war from the country to which it has greatest affinity. Having seized Trieste from Austria-Hungary in the post-Versailles division of Europe, Italy in turn lost much of the city's hinterland to the hated Yugoslavs after World War II. It is full of fascinating literary and cultural associations: James Joyce lived here during and after World War I, and the café on the quay where he used to hold forth looks as if he might walk in at any moment.

NAPLES reminds me of Lisbon—a fortified port city, shabby, picturesque, and full of life. Here our Central American problems—as indeed our views on SALT, nuclear testing, South Africa, etc.—lie with the local press, which is intermittently under the control of militants of the Italian Communist party. However, according to what one of our few friends in the media here tells me, the real damage is done by the *Washington Post*, whose articles are reprinted verbatim by the Neapolitan papers. When I suggest perhaps a bit too facetiously that no one in Washington takes the *Post* seriously as a newspaper (we all turn first to the "Style" section to read the gossip, and after that, to the ads, comics, and sports, relying for real news on the *New York Times*), he remarks, "That's all very well in Washington; you have a context in which to place things, and an alternative source of information. Here things are different."

Paris-Grenoble-Lyon-Lille,
May 11-17

FRANCE is the only really serious country in Europe, if by serious one means having the capacity to address major political questions head-on; unlike the Germanic and Nordic countries, French political culture is concerned with outcomes, not just intentions. Further, it is the only country in Europe with what might be called a "libertarian Left"—a serious, anti-Communist socialism, which for a visitor from the intellectual provinces

of the United States takes some getting used to. Finally, because of their own colonial past, the French have far fewer illusions about the Third World; also, of late they have become very unsentimental about terrorism.

My hotel in Paris is around the corner from an 18th-century building which houses both the Navy and Finance Ministries; the block is acrawl with policemen in flak jackets leading sniffing German shepherds around. When the French Interior Ministry decides you are a suspicious foreigner, out you go—no civil-liberties union, no bleeding hearts, no sanctuary movement, no nothing. Whether we would wish to copy such practices is beside the point. Taken together, they bespeak a state of mind which makes France a much less propitious breeding ground for Sandinista sympathizers than other European countries.

This is not to say that there is any active *support* for our policies toward Nicaragua, merely that they are accepted by large sectors of the French political community as an inevitable consequence of certain geopolitical realities. When I explain to some people at the French Socialist party that the real issue in the United States is not what kind of role we should play in Central America, but whether we have a role to play there at all, the response is frank disbelief. "What nonsense!" one of my hosts bursts out. "You *can't* withdraw from there; it's your sphere of influence. You have vital security interests there!" After I catch my breath I say, "Well, you have to come to Paris to hear that kind of talk nowadays, and then to make sure you hear it, you'd best head straight to the French Socialist party headquarters!"

I was last in France in 1968. It is a different country today: more stable, more prosperous, more self-confident, and therefore more tolerant of foreigners. The real key to the country's current state of mind seems to me to be its emancipation from the bugaboo of Western culture—self-hatred. My description of the political-intellectual situation in the United States to a French friend who's never been there draws the remarkable re-

sponse, "My God, it sounds just like West Germany." Have I overstated my case? I can only hope so.

Of course, the hard Left still exists here, albeit in diminished numbers and intellectual force. You can still see it in places like the *Maison de l'Amérique Latine*, where I have the dubious pleasure of participating in a two-day conference on Nicaragua ("*une solution démocratique et pacifique*"). Though the conference organizer, Jean Elleinstein, is supposed to be a repentant ex-Communist, no one else seems to be an ex-anything. The audience is the usual mixture of professional Latin American expatriates (some of whose countries have, unfortunately, recently reverted to democracy, in the act heartlessly depriving them of the consecrated status of "refugee"), UN bureaucrats, renegade Catholic priests in turtleneck sweaters, and intellectualoids of various sizes and shapes.

A panel on "Human Rights in Nicaragua" is allowed to run more than an hour overtime; thus my own contribution, which follows at the end of the day, is delivered to a largely empty hall. (Elleinstein has quit the place, and left one of his assistants to chair this final part of the meeting.) The previous panel has established that there is no human-rights problem in Nicaragua, though José Estéban González, the founder of the Nicaraguan Human Rights Commission, now living in European exile, rises to question the finding with a wealth of facts and figures. Both panel and audience are wholly unmoved; he might as well have been speaking in Bulgarian.

My most vociferous questioners are American expatriates, proving to their French and Latin American friends that in spite of their shameful place of birth, they have somehow managed to rise above it all. This is an invitation to return the compliment with no holds barred, and by the end of the session I am actually enjoying myself. But then, as I have been learning on this trip, compared with the loony grandmothers in the U.S. who have discovered Central America "down at our church," the Sandinista supporters in Europe are a piece of cake.

Vienna, May 17-19

THERE is only one topic dominating U.S.-Austrian relations these days, and it isn't Central America. The decision of the Justice Department to refuse entry to President Kurt Waldheim has infuriated everybody, and plunged our embassy people into a deep, dark funk. Of course, the irony of it all is that if the Austrians themselves hadn't insisted on our giving Waldheim a clean bill of health, we could have slipped the whole matter under the rug and pretended the Holtzman amendment didn't exist. As it is, by forcing us to confrontation, they got the worst of both worlds—and so have we.

Waldheim is, of course, a most unappetizing character and by lying about his wartime record, he laid himself open to an exquisite revenge by his enemies. However, one can take little comfort from his comeuppance, since his People's party is much friendlier to the United States than the Socialists, or rather *was*, as one of its members of parliament emphasizes to me. So, we've punished our traditional allies and, in effect if not intent, rushed to embrace their opponents, whose notion of neutralism is more or less proximate to that of the Swedes. The People's party only recently forced the Socialists to split their aid to Nicaragua into five pieces, apportioning it equally among the Central American countries. Now it's unclear what will happen.

Zurich-Bern-Geneva, May 20-24

UNTIL recently, Switzerland was known as a neutral country, in the value-free sense of that term. Now some Swiss have discovered the pleasures of having an enemy in the United States (which never hits back) rather than, say, in Germany or the Soviet Union (which just might). This makes it possible to luxuriate in new forms of political expression, such as solidarity with Nicaragua (whose dictatorial aspects can be described as a mere reaction to U.S. aggression) and indignation at El Salvador (whose human-rights violations are said to be glossed over, or even supported, by the Reagan administration). Such posturings have their uses,

particularly to distract attention from new and embarrassing revelations of Swiss involvement in other parts of the world. (It was not, after all, *Belgian* banks which acted as intermediaries for the alleged activities of Colonel North in the Iran-*contra* affair.)

At the same time, support for Nicaragua allows an outlet for that current of Swiss political culture which seeks to be part of "Europe," which is to say, the Europe of the Socialist International. Two Swiss development workers have recently been killed in Nicaragua, presumably by the *contras*, a traumatic event in a country which has not heard a shot fired in anger in many, many generations. It has provoked, naturally, prolonged and sometimes heated exchanges between our embassy, on the one hand, and the unions, churches, and the Foreign Ministry on the other. Switzerland gives economic aid to Nicaragua, almost to the exclusion of other Central American countries—a most unneutral thing to do, one would think, unless one regards these matters as totally outside the realm of East-West relations, or even of broader political values. A senior official of the Foreign Ministry who has just returned from Central America is pessimistic about the Sandinistas; he depicts the Ortega brothers as committed to the militarization of the country ("never mind whether or not the people starve"), but is quite vague as to what policy responses are appropriate. My guess is that aid to Nicaragua will probably be increased next year.

Switzerland is odd in that it is highly cosmopolitan and remarkably provincial, all at the same time. At a dinner for journalists at the embassy residence one hears notions positively quaint in their antiquity (the need for the U.S. to abandon *le grand bâton* in Central America; the need to be concerned about democracy in *other* Latin American countries, not just or even especially in Nicaragua; the need to emphasize economic as opposed to military aid, etc., etc.). These people are not stupid, and they are not ignorant. But at a certain point one begins to find it difficult to take some of them seriously. Here criticism of our Central

American policy appears to be a shell game played for the sheer amusement of it, and if that bothers us, so much the better.

Stockholm, May 25-27

THIS stunningly beautiful city is the capital of bad news. Last year Sweden gave Nicaragua \$25 million in aid, making that Central American country one of its most important welfare clients. This should neither surprise nor shock, since, after all, Sweden is still giving enormous amounts to Vietnam. The Swedes built a paper factory for Hanoi. In spite of the fact that it uses slave labor the enterprise still loses vast sums. The Swedes have poured literally millions, perhaps even billions, down this rat-hole. They recently expressed some vague unhappiness with the Vietnamese occupation of Cambodia, and as a sign of their displeasure announced they would give aid for only two years more. The Vietnamese appear unworried. Perhaps they know something the Swedes do not.

All of this has a simple explanation. Swedish politicians like to discover and "adopt" Third World revolutions—Olof Palme found Vietnam, and Pierre Schiori, the current Permanent Undersecretary of the Foreign Office, has taken Nicaragua under his wing. When their protégés turn out badly, the Swedes continue to fund them anyway, out of arrogance and false pride, as well as a certain pathological hatred of the United States. The latter seems to occupy a disproportionate role as an organizing principle in the sorting out of priorities; why else would Vietnam and Nicaragua be so heavily favored, when there are so many other, presumably worthy, candidates for Swedish munificence? South Africa, however, is also a huge bugaboo. Much money goes to the so-called "front-line states," corrupt Marxist dictatorships like Mozambique and Angola, or just plain corrupt dictatorships like Zimbabwe and Zambia. When I ask a member of parliament whether, in his view, such countries have good development projects which justify such preferential treatment, he replies without hesitation, "Oh no, not at all. We just do it for political reasons."

Basically Sweden could be described as a First World country in most important respects, and certainly as far as Europe is concerned, Sweden operates on the assumption that its interests lie within the broad political community we call NATO. The Swedes even imagine that, neutral or not, if the Soviets try anything funny, the U.S. will come to their aid. This view, explained to me on my first night by members of our embassy staff, leaves me frankly breathless.

Meanwhile, in the Third World the Swedes are following a Soviet-bloc policy, in effect if not in specific intent. That is, they favor Communism in Central America, and they prove it by aiding not only the Sandinistas but the Salvadoran guerrillas. If they do not perceive our displeasure with this in sufficient degree, it is certainly our fault, not theirs; we haven't yet made it expensive enough in Volvos and Electrolux vacuum cleaners. On the basis of a brief chat with our ambassador, I gather nothing of the sort is in prospect. Quite the contrary: for the first time in more than twenty-five years, a Swedish Prime Minister is set to visit Washington, and—another feather in the envoy's cap—Mrs. Reagan is due here in a couple of weeks.

One might well ask, why are the Swedes so anti-American? After all, unlike the British, they haven't been displaced in recent memory from great-power status and cultural hegemony within their language area; and unlike the Germans, they do not have to tolerate more than a quarter of a million American soldiers and their families in their midst, who thereby prevent them from reunifying with their brethren in the East and living peacefully ever after. The answer would seem to be this: Sweden and the United States comprise opposite poles of the continuum of Western utopias. Both have managed to combine a high standard of living with political democracy and pluralism, with the U.S. representing the individualist end of the continuum, Sweden its collectivist antipode. The problem is that in consumer preferences and styles of life, most younger Swedes are less and less drawn to their

own traditions; the U.S. pole is a stronger one in many ways, and intellectuals and Social Democratic politicians feel the need to resist it in any way they can.

Put another way, the United States is a permanent temptation against which Swedish leaders must protect their people. In the 1940's Gunnar Myrdal discovered our racial problem; in the 1960's Olof Palme discovered Vietnam; now they have Nicaragua to play with. Presumably in a Biden administration there would be something else—one hopes so, for the Swedes' sake.

Of course, there is nothing the Swedes could have done to prevent us from passing the Civil Rights Act, or, for that matter, from withdrawing from Vietnam, but in Central America they have a concrete opportunity to add fat to the fire, and within the boundaries of their deepest politico-cultural needs they would be rather silly not to do so.

Concluding Notes

THOUGH the Europeans can pretend the Third World is far away, it is becoming less so every day. Of course, in France the African, North African, and Asian presence has always been great, but now societies which until yesterday were racially homogeneous have begun to harbor significant minorities. The woman who cleans my hotel room in Vienna is clearly Indo-Chinese, and all the newspaper vendors are Indians or Pakistanis. There are 10,000 Tamils in Switzerland—causing no small amount of anxiety among the Swiss, since each one has many relatives at home who would also like to live there, and in fact plan to do so at the earliest opportunity. Even Sweden is now the home of thousands of Chileans, Iranians, Iraqis, Kurds, and others. Not all of these coexist in perfect cordiality; Stockholm has, in fact, become the site of some ugly confrontations along sectarian lines. Quite recently a street confrontation between pro- and anti-Khomeini Iranians has erupted into violence, with each side throwing paper bags of human excrement at the other. Unfortunately Gunnar Myrdal is no longer alive to provide us with the fullest

possible documentation of this very interesting phenomenon.

It is not difficult to see what attracts these people to Western Europe—it is orderly and prosperous, with a style of life which has many refinements unavailable elsewhere, certainly not in the “developing” countries from which the immigrants have come. In the 19th century people like Henry James felt as drawn to Europe as Asians, Africans, and Latin Americans do today, but a hundred years later he might view matters from a slightly different perspective. The countries of Central and Northern Europe have become what might be called societies of predetermined outcome. That is, a concrete decision was made a generation or more ago to level economic differences and guarantee that there would be no poverty and little real wealth.

This has brought about a remarkable state of affairs, where the really important question facing most Europeans at this season of the year is where to spend their four weeks of paid vacation (six weeks in Sweden)—in Spain, Italy, Greece, or the United States, or even in the Seychelles, Cuba, or Tahiti. Such is the final destiny, then, of the peoples who produced Strindberg and Sibelius, Mozart and Haydn, Jacob Burckhardt and Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Only the French are capable of looking up from their immediate environment and seeing the world as an inter-related whole.

I do not mean to be condescending or negative. There are good and ample reasons to celebrate this consummation; the entire modern history of many countries was one long class war. The walls of the Karl Marx Hof in Vienna, one of the first public-housing projects in Europe, are still disfigured by mortar shells expended in the civil war-cum-coup of 1934, which brought to an end the first Social Democratic period of Austrian politics. The sight reminds me that this placid republic was once as unstable, or at least as politically problematic, as some Latin American countries are today. For all I know the decision to create static societies at a high level of relative egalitarian distribution was the right one, particularly since the

United States seems so anxious to assume responsibility for their defense and security. (I leave aside the whole question of whether the juggling act of egalitarian distribution and high productivity can continue indefinitely; most economists now believe that it cannot, and that difficult choices lie not far ahead.)

But in such societies there is no place for two kinds of people—the idealist and the go-getter. Now, in the United States, when you feel in a guilty mood and want to have a good cry, you can start talking about the homeless, or the shamefully small number of Asian-American women who have been selected to be astronauts. But what do you do in Switzerland? One person sprayed onto the wall of the Cathedral in Bern, LIBERTY FOR POLITICAL PRISONERS IN SWITZERLAND: a perfect example of what might be called Repression Envy. All of the great battles for social equality have been won here, and those who feel called upon to right the wrongs of society must either pretend they still exist, or go abroad to look for them—picking cotton and coffee in Nicaragua, or working in one of the “development” agencies busily undermining the economies of Sub-Saharan Africa. As for the go-getters, in Austria and German Switzerland they flee to West Germany, everywhere else to the United States.

Indeed, one senses that Europe needs the United States very badly—not merely for defense, and for someone to blame for the loss of cultural and international predominance, but also as a final escape hatch in case things turn out badly at home. If there is one thing Europeans fear more than U.S. hegemony it is the opposite—the lack of U.S. interest and involvement in European affairs. For too many people, the whole Nicaragua question—whether the Sandinistas are good or bad, or whether they are bad because they are bad or because we are making them bad—is merely symbolic, and lacks all substance. Central America is seen as an undesirable distraction, unworthy of our attention, which should, in their view, be focused exactly where theirs is—on themselves.

Books in Review

Artist in Conflict

BERNSTEIN: A BIOGRAPHY. By JOAN PEYSER. *Beech Tree Books/William Morrow*. 481 pp. \$22.95.

Reviewed by WILLIAM H. YOUNGREN

IN THE brief time since its publication, Joan Peyser's new biography of Leonard Bernstein has been frequently and vigorously attacked in the press. The attacks center on the fact that it is, apparently, the first of the several books on Bernstein to speak frankly and in detail about his homosexuality—or, more accurately, about the promiscuously homosexual side of the bisexual life he has led ever since adolescence.

I must say that this strikes me as a non-issue. Miss Peyser is not a very clear or thoughtful writer, and it is finally impossible to make out just what she thinks of her famous subject. But her book is neither meanspirited nor sensationalistic. It is, rather, an honest, though not altogether successful, attempt to understand an extremely complex man and artist. Bernstein has led a willfully flamboyant life, and his homosexuality has been common knowledge for decades; neither he nor his public could reasonably have expected a responsible biographer to ignore it.

Anyway, the fact of homosexuality (or bisexuality) is not, in itself, very interesting. What is interesting, and is illuminatingly explored by Miss Peyser, is the fact that Bernstein's indecision about his sexual identity is deeply connected to other, more publicly relevant sorts of radical indecision or ambivalence: about whether to become a composer or a conductor, and whether to compose "serious" concert works or "popular," jazz-derived theatrical pieces.

Bernstein's phenomenal gifts were obvious early and were soon

recognized by important people. As a Harvard undergraduate he composed music for a production of Aristophanes's *The Birds*, organized a performance of Marc Blitzstein's *The Cradle Will Rock*, and attracted the attention of the composer Aaron Copland and of Dimitri Mitropoulos, then conductor of the Minneapolis Symphony. Both Copland and Mitropoulos were homosexual, and the example of Mitropoulos was especially valuable to Bernstein since it proved that a homosexual could succeed in the very public role of orchestral conductor. He started showing his scores to Copland, and Mitropoulos pronounced him a genius and promised to make him his assistant at Minneapolis after Bernstein's graduation from Harvard in June 1939.

Yet Bernstein spent the next four years scuffling. Mitropoulos reneged on his offer of an assistantship, extended it again the following year, and once again reneged. Copland was not particularly encouraging about Bernstein's compositions, and recommended, as Mitropoulos had done, that he become a conductor. So in the fall of 1939 Bernstein enrolled at Philadelphia's Curtis Institute as a conducting student of Fritz Reiner. Though he hated Curtis, which (probably with some justice) he called "a virtuoso factory," he stuck it out for two years, graduating with a double major in conducting and piano in June 1941. His summers were spent at Tanglewood, studying conducting with the Boston Symphony's Serge Koussevitzky, who, along with Mitropoulos, was to be one of the two major influences on Bernstein's life.

All this time he was composing seriously. Shortly after his graduation from Harvard he had begun sketching what was to become *Jeremiah*, his first symphony, and other works soon followed. The astonishing thing is that he took no courses in composition, either at Curtis or at Tanglewood, where he could have studied with Paul Hindemith. "It never occurred to me to study composition," he said

in 1985. "Whatever I wrote I took to Aaron. Aaron was my guide." Nor did Bernstein follow the example of his Harvard teacher Walter Piston, of Copland, and of many other American composers and go to France to study with Nadia Boulanger.

Miss Peyser explains this failure by saying that Bernstein "resisted all discipline." But I find that unconvincing. Bernstein did, after all, submit to a good deal of discipline in his conducting studies. It seems to me, rather, that the idea of committing himself to a career as a serious composer frightened (and still frightens) him—even though it obviously means more to him than anything else in the world. Miss Peyser notes that although Bernstein is always complaining that he has no time to compose, whenever he does take the time he becomes deeply depressed. And she also points out while he has never accepted criticism of his conducting, and has often ridiculed and publicly humiliated his fellow conductors, he has always "invited and accepted criticism when it came to his compositions." Bernstein himself has said: "I showed what I did to people I was in awe of. That seemed to be as much a study of composition as I could take." In those words I hear not resistance to discipline or defiance of authority but rather diffidence and fear of failure.

On the other hand, Miss Peyser is quite right in saying that the early 1940's were an unpromising time for American composers, and that conducting provided Bernstein with the "immediate gratification," the "applause and adoring crowds," that he so obviously needs. But these did not come at once. In the fall of 1941, he worked briefly as Koussevitzky's assistant, but he never got to conduct a concert. The only real job he could land during this period was an insignificant one at Harms, the New York music publishers, making arrangements and doing odd jobs.

Finally, at the end of the summer of 1943, Artur Rodzinski, who had just been appointed conductor of the New York Philharmonic,

WILLIAM H. YOUNGREN, *here making his first appearance in COMMENTARY*, teaches English at Boston College and writes on music for the Atlantic and Fanfare.

transaction

New and Recent Books in International Relations

POLITICS AND THE ETHIOPIAN FAMINE: 1984-1985

Jason W. Clay and Bonnie K. Holcomb

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POLITICS AND THE ETHIOPIAN FAMINE 1984-1985

Jason W. Clay and Bonnie K. Holcomb

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asked Bernstein to be his assistant. But so far as anyone could remember, no Philharmonic assistant had ever actually been called upon to conduct a concert. The real break came that November 14, when Bruno Walter, who was scheduled to conduct, lay sick with the flu and Rodzinski was stuck in the snow up at his Stockbridge farm. Bernstein stepped in at the last minute and conducted a difficult program to rave reviews. The rest, as they say, is history.

SUDDENLY he found himself famous and sought after, with Koussevitzky, Rodzinski, and Reiner each clamoring to be known as his one true mentor. Moreover, *Jeremiah*, which had been completed in 1942 but had failed to win a New England Conservatory competition that year, was finally given its premiere, at Pittsburgh in January 1944, with Bernstein conducting. This time it won the Music Critics' Circle Award, and further performances followed.

Koussevitzky, who was nearing retirement, had set his heart on Bernstein's being his successor. But Bernstein, during his slack periods, had been hanging out with his friends Betty Comden and Adolph Green on the fringes of the New York theatrical world, and composing for the musical theater had come to appeal strongly to him. The ballet *Fancy Free*, choreographed by Jerome Robbins, opened in the spring of 1944, and its success prompted its expansion into the musical *On the Town*, on which Comden and Green collaborated. *On the Town* had a run of 483 performances on Broadway, and this unsavory success, combined perhaps with the fact of Bernstein's Jewishness and his homosexuality, was enough to put him out of the running for the Boston Symphony job. But Koussevitzky, who also disapproved of Bernstein's Broadway activities, persisted, going so far as to offer his resignation if Bernstein were not appointed to succeed him. Much to Koussevitzky's surprise, his resignation was accepted, and in 1949 the dreary reign of Charles Munch set in at the Boston Symphony.

Apparently, Koussevitzky lectured

Bernstein not only about his fatal attraction to Broadway but also about his homosexuality, and tried to fix up his protégé with his wife's niece. But she married the Boston Symphony's principal violist instead. In 1946, however, the actress Felicia Montealegre met Bernstein and instantly decided that she would marry him. They became engaged in January 1947, and Bernstein worked away at his serious composition, completing his second symphony, *Age of Anxiety*, which Koussevitzky premiered, with Bernstein playing the solo piano part, in April 1949. In the meantime, however, the engagement to Felicia had been broken off, owing to Bernstein's continuing homosexual involvements. But Koussevitzky died in June 1951, and his influence, felt from beyond the grave, triumphed—with an assist from the iron-willed, self-destructive Felicia. She and Bernstein were married the following September; he wore a suit and shoes that had belonged to Koussevitzky.

Over the last thirty-five years, Bernstein has become a world figure. But the three major conflicts established during his formative years have persisted. He and Felicia had three children, but his homosexual escapades continually embarrassed her and led to a separation shortly before her death from lung cancer in 1978. His sexual conflict, at least, seems now to have been resolved in favor of homosexuality. But the other two conflicts—between composing and conducting, and between serious and popular composition—have, according to Miss Peyser, made him miserable. His tenure at the New York Philharmonic, of which he became conductor in 1958, was marked by such grand successes as the 1959-60 Mahler festival, but also by radical (and critically noted) unevenness of performance. His greatest triumphs have been his theater scores: for *Wonderful Town* (1953), the film *On the Waterfront* (1954), the brilliant box-office failure *Candide* (1956), and, most splendid of all, *West Side Story* (1957). But his only major theatrical venture since *West Side Story*, 1976's *1600 Pennsylvania Avenue*, was a dismal flop. His ser-

ious compositions, on the other hand, have been a wash-out: the opera *Trouble in Tahiti* (1950); his third symphony, *Kaddish* (1963); *Mass* (1971); and his second opera *A Quiet Place* (1983), a sequel to *Trouble in Tahiti*. How, one wonders, can so gifted and intelligent a man as Bernstein have been led to foist on the world these imitative, embarrassing, maudlin travesties of musical creation?

MISS PEYSER, who appears to have read a little psychology, attributes Bernstein's failure as a serious composer—and, indeed, all the other failures of what she sees as his failed life—to his troubled relation with his father. And she convincingly shows how he has used his serious works to dramatize this central conflict. The husband of the unhappy couple in *Trouble in Tahiti* is, like Bernstein senior, named Sam; in *Kaddish* the main character wrestles with God in a way that all too clearly projects adolescent father-son struggles; *Mass*, which managed to offend Roman Catholics as much as *Kaddish* had offended Jews, is a mish-mash of anti-authority sentiment. Indeed, the nakedness and crudeness with which these issues are dramatized account in large part for the tawdriness of the works.

But Miss Peyser wisely begins her book by exposing Bernstein's tendency to create myths about his early life—most of which concern his imagined heroic triumphs over imagined deprivations. Sam Bernstein, quite understandably, did not want his elder son to become a musician—to wind up playing the piano (as he put it) “under a palm tree in some cocktail lounge.” But he does not seem, on Miss Peyser's showing, to have been such a bad sort. He grumbled aplenty but acknowledged his son's talent, accepted his choice of career, was very proud of him, and was even capable of treating their relation with a certain panache. “Every genius had a handicap,” he told a reporter in the mid-1950's; “Lenny had a father.” As Miss Peyser immediately points out, “Sam Bernstein was wrong. He was no handicap.” Yet when she shifts into her psychological-generalizing mode, she

seems to buy the myths wholesale; too much of her book is spent unearthing father-figures and conflicts with authority.

The really interesting thing about Bernstein's childhood is his extraordinarily close relation to his sister Shirley and to their much younger brother Burton, who for a while he and Shirley pretended was their child. (In *A Quiet Place* Bernstein drops loud hints that his relation to Shirley may actually have been incestuous.) With the help of a friend named Eddie Ryack, the Bernstein siblings even invented a private language, called Rybernian, which they still speak among themselves. One is reminded of the Brontës. Granted that Sam and Jennie Bernstein had an unhappy marriage, there are many children of unhappy marriages who do not go to such lengths in banding together to create a private, hermetically-sealed world.

Since I am not a psychologist, I will not venture to guess what might have caused this highly unusual situation. But I do think that it may well be one cause not only of Bernstein's failure as a serious composer but also of his success as a theatrical composer and of the "anguish" that Miss Peyser says he now suffers because he "is most renowned for *West Side Story*" rather than for his symphonies and operas.

THOUGH he has so often (and so compulsively) presented himself to the public as an overgrown, exhibitionistic, oversexed adolescent, Bernstein wants desperately to be serious, to be a real grown-up artist. And for him this means being a composer rather than a conductor and composing not Broadway shows but great works in the accredited genres, symphonies and operas that deal memorably with the big issues. Yet his very eagerness, precisely because it is born of desperation, ensures his failure. In his composing as in his public persona, it is the child in him that has real vitality. What he is good at is being playful, frivolous, high-spirited, showy. Thus we have the matchless Overture to *Candide* and such fine songs as "Glitter and Be Gay," "America," and "Officer

Krupke"—which will be heard in the land long after *Kaddish*, *Mass*, and the other serious works are forgotten. As they constrain him by forcing him to deny his true gift, so his theater scores set him free. He once said, in a moment of candor: "Every work I write, for whatever medium, is really theater music."

Now to have kept alive the child in oneself is ordinarily taken as a sign of health, and to have done so as productively as Bernstein has done is an achievement that most people would feel proud of. But the precocious self-enclosedness of Bernstein's childhood world, I would venture to suggest, has left him with an abnormally heightened sense of the gap between childhood and adulthood, with a powerful yearning to grow up and an equally powerful conviction that to grow up would mean betraying one's truest self and is, in any case, impossible—that the gap can never really be bridged. Pain, not pride, has been the result. It is, as Miss Peyser remarks, most significant that in the spring of 1950, just when Bernstein was struggling with the idea of marriage, he was drawn to write songs for a Broadway production of *Peter Pan*.

The pain, one hopes, has been eased somewhat by Bernstein's great success as a conductor. But it is perhaps the conflict that produced the pain that has also been responsible for the striking unevenness, over the years, of his performances. Since he has never been one of my favorite conductors, I have not followed his career as closely as I have many others. But he has always seemed to me bewilderingly unpredictable, given the magnitude of his gifts. Where there is any temptation to emotional extravagance, he often succumbs disastrously—though usually to thunderous applause. I recall performances of Berlioz, Tchaikowsky, and Mahler in which his dwelling on particular effects distorted the music almost beyond recognition. Yet in his 1961 recording of the Mahler Third Symphony, while the earlier movements are marred by such distortions, the long, slow finale—where one might most have expected them—is flawless: sub-

lime, restrained, perfectly shaped. (The performance is available only on CBS compact disc M2K 42196.)

Sometimes the distortions can result from Bernstein's intellectual pretensions rather than from his emotional extravagance. The album booklet accompanying his 1981 recording of *Tristan und Isolde* (LP: Philips 6769 091; CD: Philips 410.447-2) informs us that Bernstein, in preparing the per-

"IN UPHOLDING, 6 to 3, pre-trial detention for dangerous criminals, the Supreme Court has effectively ruled that prosecutors and judges may take cognizance of the facts of life: For many defendants, crime is a career, not a sudden fling. Chief Justice Rehnquist laid down protections for the accused, but ultimately put public safety first. The ACLU didn't like it one bit. Those are the breaks, though. After all, the Constitution is a living document."

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formance, had "seemed to live in Wagner's world of love and friendship and in the twilight of the Schopenhauer that had inspired the text." The result is that Acts I and II, which were recorded in January and April, are unvaryingly slow and dreamlike, with every phrase caressed and crooned almost out of existence. But by November, when Bernstein recorded Act III, he had evidently forgotten all about the Schopenhauerian twilight, and the performance has force, conviction, and variety.

Bernstein has been more consistently successful with Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven—I think particularly of his 1962-67 recordings of the Haydn "Paris" Symphonies (Nos. 82-87), which are unfortunately not available just now. And he has also done well by Stravinsky and Copland. But his performances of Gershwin, with whom, for obvious reasons, he has long felt an affectionate identification, are among the worst I have ever heard. Listen, for example, to his vapid, listless 1958 *An American in Paris* and his grotesquely sentimental 1959 *Rhapsody in Blue*. Both performances are available on CBS M 31804 (LP) and CBS MK 42264 (CD).

ONE lays down Joan Peyser's *Bernstein: A Biography* feeling more sympathetic toward this often repellent man than I for one should have thought possible. And that is enough to make it an important and indispensable book. Yet Miss Peyser writes clumsily and often vulgarly, and her mode of exposition, especially in her later chapters, is so loose and freely associative that the most earnest reader has a tough time molding the details she provides into a coherent picture.

Also, she makes so many factual errors that one is not sure how far to trust her. On one page she has Toscanini leaving the New York Philharmonic in 1937 (rather than 1936), while on another she gets the date right but says that he was "dismissed"—which, as she ought to know, he was not. She also says that Stravinsky's first appearance with the Philharmonic was during the 1944-45 season, whereas he had conducted the orchestra in 1925, 1937,

and 1940, and on the latter two occasions had made important recordings with it. An incident she reports from Peter Gradenwitz's 1984 biography of Bernstein did not take place, as she says it did, "at a dinner party in London" but rather in what Gradenwitz calls "my modest private apartment" in Tel Aviv. I suppose it is less important (though very odd) that she thinks that *On the Waterfront* was Marlon Brando's "first film role."

Though Miss Peyser is a music critic, she never discusses any particular Bernstein performance in detail. And though she edited the *Musical Quarterly* from 1977 to 1984, she sometimes writes about music in a curiously illiterate way. At an all-Mozart concert, Bernstein, she tells us, "played the piano solos in the G major concerto." And she says that Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau "sang a solo" in Bernstein's recording of Mahler's *Das Lied von der Erde*—rather than that he sang the three songs the score allotted to him. Even her spelling is eccentric. The conductors Charles Munch and Karl Böhm become, for no discernible reason, Münch and Boehm.

In the end she leaves us with a Bernstein now nearing seventy, rich in honors and royalties but awash in Scotch and self-pity. I sincerely hope that it isn't as dire as that. With all his failings and failures, Bernstein is a very considerable figure and—as she shows us, albeit perhaps unwittingly—a rather endearing one. He deserves a still better biography.

Enlightened Adversary

ENEMY IN THE PROMISED LAND: AN EGYPTIAN WOMAN'S JOURNEY INTO ISRAEL. By SANA HASAN. *Pantheon*. 335 pp. \$18.95.

Reviewed by EDWARD ALEXANDER

FROM 1974 to 1977 Sana Hasan gained notoriety as "the Egyptian in Israel," the wayward daugh-

EDWARD ALEXANDER is professor of English at Tel Aviv University and the University of Washington. His book, *The Jewish Idea and Its Enemies*, will be published by Transaction in the fall.

ter of Egypt's former ambassador to the United States who had undertaken a "personal mission for peace" in defiance of her parents, her government, and her diplomat-husband, who divorced her shortly after her arrival in "the promised land." Her new book about those three years suggests that Israel had been her destiny long before she decided, at age twenty-five, to take leave from her studies in political science at Harvard in order to act out her belief in "dialogue" and direct negotiation.

From an early age, the hatred of Israel inculcated in Miss Hasan by her Egyptian education had produced unexpected results: "'Zionist' . . . held for me the allure of the forbidden." At fourteen, she entered an exclusively Jewish group in Cairo, and while still in her teens she sat holding hands and discussing the Arab-Israeli conflict with Moshe Dayan on a TWA jet from New York. Also, she was brought up "spoiled, self-indulgent, and egocentric" by cultivated, wealthy, traditional parents—they are an abiding presence in the book—in an atmosphere that inevitably endowed even her slightest gestures of rebellion with potent meaning. What greater gesture of rebellion could there be than a journey that disgraced her parents, put them (or so they thought) in danger of imprisonment, and convinced them that their mad daughter would be tried by a military tribunal if ever she were allowed to return to Egypt?

Enemy in the Promised Land is based on the diary Miss Hasan diligently kept throughout her stay in Israel. She proceeds chronologically to recount her impressively variegated experiences from the moment of her arrival in Tel Aviv until, three years later, she comes to fear that she has "become vulnerable to identifying myself with Israel" and "grown deeply attached to Israel in spite of myself." The chronological ordering is, however, frequently (and skillfully) interrupted by Proustian reveries and remembrances of things past, especially of her own genteel upbringing, which serve as a foil to what she sees in Israel.

The motto for this book should

have been Ruskin's assertion, in *Modern Painters*, that the highest human activity is to see something and report clearly what you saw, because "thousands can think for one who can see." Miss Hasan's superb talent as a novelistic observer upon whom nothing is lost is evident from her first description of the lurid phantasmagoria that is Tel Aviv. By the Arab instructors of her youth and by the foolish Israeli professors she heard at Harvard, she had been taught to believe that Israel was an alien European "thorn in the heart of the Arab nation." Five minutes in Tel Aviv's central bus station prove sufficient to set her straight:

Pedestrians, buses, horse carriages laden with fruits, bicycles, trucks, cabs—all had right of way. Masses of people zigzagged between cars. Buses suddenly zeroed in from side alleys. . . . Vendors crowded the sidewalks. . . . [A] peddler, seated at the edge of a bathtub planted in the middle of the sidewalk, was hawking toilets, sinks, gravestones, tiles from Italy, and a needle-point portrait of Moshe Dayan.

She immediately sees, with a clarity and minuteness of vision that are the chief qualities of this book, that "Israel is the Middle East!"

ALTHOUGH she fancies herself a political thinker—how could it be otherwise, after earning her doctorate at Harvard?—Miss Hasan's standard is primarily aesthetic. The first full-scale blast at Israel in the book comes from the Israeli "dove" Lova Eliav, but, grateful as she is for his contribution, Miss Hasan will not allow it to undo the absurdity of the image she has already created of Eliav as the man who said that real peace would come only when Israeli tourists could see the Pyramids and Egyptian tourists could visit Dizengoff Street, Tel Aviv's tawdry shopping thoroughfare.

With Israel's flamboyant right-wing politician Geula Cohen, however, Miss Hasan strikes up a warm friendship. Although she is attracted to Geula Cohen partly out of admiration for her singleminded dedication to the land of Israel, and partly out of a certain revul-

sion at "liberal and left-wing Israelis, whose relentless self-criticism embarrassed me," it is clear that the dominant magnetic force is aesthetic (and perhaps also, as is very often the case with Miss Hasan, sexual):

I had conjured up an elderly woman in a dowdy suit, with sharp features and short-cropped gray hair. . . . Instead, there stood before me a gorgeous creature with long black hair that

fell in unruly curls over her amaranth robe. Her eyes were dark and sensual.

Another "strikingly beautiful" Israeli with whom Miss Hasan becomes entangled is a prostitute named Leila, whom she tries to "help" while working as a volunteer in a home for delinquents. When she hears of Leila's death, she marvels at her own "hard-heartedness: I had not shed a single tear." There are several mo-

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Willard A. Weiss, prior to his recent retirement, spent his professional life as an attorney and actuary in Cleveland, Ohio. He is a member of the American Bar Association, a Fellow of the Conference of Actuaries in Public Practice, and a member of the American Academy of Actuaries. He is an Enrolled Actuary licensed by the federal government and has served as President of E. M. Klein and Associates, actuaries from 1939 to 1979. He is the author of two trade volumes.

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ments in the book which lead the reader to believe that if Sana Hasan were to see a young woman atop the railing of a bridge over the Nile, poised for her own destruction, she would first take out her diary to write a description of how the light fell over the poor woman's hair and only then try to stop her from plunging in.

Another aspect of Miss Hasan's artistic sensibility is her chameleon-like ability to assume false identities in order to satisfy her "savage curiosity" by trying out ways of life alien to her own. At various times during her three years she experiments with (among other things) cow-milking, chicken-packing, social work, lesbianism, and scullery service in the King David Hotel kitchen (her description of which is likely to serve as an antidote to anyone's desire to eat in that famous institution). Often she "passes" as a Jew, and on one occasion insinuates herself into the household of an ultra-Orthodox couple doing "missionary" work, persuading them that she wishes to be rescued from her Jewish secularity. "I had been about to tell her my real identity, but now I thought to myself, why not? Here at last was a chance to live the religious life. . . ." Her powers of imaginative sympathy enable her to feel, for the first time in her life, respect for religious devotion, and, in consequence, resentment of the narrow-minded bigotry of secular Israelis toward their religious countrymen. She is awed by the "kindness, generosity, and sincere faith" of these people. But, aware that she has betrayed their friendship by deceit, she abruptly removes herself when they bring a prospective bridegroom home for her.

Incidents of this kind evoke a double reaction from the reader. On the one hand, he wonders whether someone who has been so adroit a liar in so many different settings can be believed about anything. On the other hand, he is likely to have a grudging respect for a writer who shows herself capable of learning, even if very slowly, that the moral life, unlike the aesthetic one, requires exclusion as well as inclusion.

The embarrassment that Miss Ha-

san feels in the instances where she allows or encourages Israelis to believe that she is a Jew is, however, as nothing to the embarrassment she feels before Israelis who have suffered grievous loss at the hands of her fellow Arabs. Among these are her Israeli lover, a (married) reserve officer whose son was killed in the Yom Kippur War; a member of a tragically war-afflicted family, with whom she soaks and scrubs tombstones at Kibbutz Ein-Harod; and the famous actress Hannah Meron, who lost her leg as a result of a savage attack by PLO terrorists at Munich airport in 1970. In each case Miss Hasan is drawn to Israel's pain, and her heart goes out to these people as if they were bone of her bone, flesh of her flesh, made by the same God. Yet in each case she "vacillates between deep sympathy and mistrust," and feels she "could not pity them without a risk."

THE "risk" is to her inherited version of the Palestine conflict, which is strictly Arab League party line, and to her political notions, which never rise above the level of leftist cliché. To her lover, who has some business ties in South Africa, she lectures that "Jews, as victims of racism, had a special moral responsibility to boycott it." This argument, as Conor Cruise O'Brien once pointed out, carries with it the corollary that the descendants of those who have *not* been victimized by racism have no special responsibility to combat it, and that descendants of the victimizers can be excused altogether for behavior that would be inexcusable in descendants of the victims. Given Miss Hasan's own loyalty to the "Palestinian" cause in the shape it was forged by an active collaborator with Nazism—the Mufti of Jerusalem—one can see why this corollary would appeal to her.

To the bereaved mother of Ein-Harod (called Kibbutz Vatik in the book), Miss Hasan feels compelled to remark, "with heartless obstinacy," that none of the four fallen members of her family would have died if not for Golda Meir's policy of "annexation," and that "all the wars, leading up to the 1973 war . . . could have been avoided had

it not been for . . . new Jewish settlements . . . being established in the occupied territories." But there were no "occupied territories" (except, of course, for those occupied by Jordan) until 1967; and how does the assertion of Egypt's continuing desire for peace comport with Nasser's relentless insistence that "Israel's existence is itself an aggression," or with Miss Hasan's own admission that during Nasser's rule such a personal gesture toward peace as her own trip to Israel would have landed her family in jail?

To Hannah Meron, she "tried to explain the desperate circumstances" that required Palestinian "commandos" to attempt to blow the actress to bits while she was drinking coffee in the Munich airport. But by this point in the story she is more "embarrassed" than ever before by what her better self tells her is morally unconscionable. She finds that "the sharp edges of my convictions were being eroded, but I could not yet see what would take their place."

Neither can I. At last year's PEN conference in New York, Amos Oz remarked, with dismay, on the contradiction between the subtlety, flexibility, and discrimination that writers exercise in their novels and poems, and the raw, blind, and dangerous crudity and blatancy of their political utterances. Sana Hasan is a striking example of this paradox. In the very book where she recounts, with intelligence and compassion, the experiences with Israelis that made her cringe at the conventional Arab equation of Israel with unredeemable evil, she does not shrink from invoking a moral desperado named Israel Shahak who equated Israeli behavior during the 1967 war with Nazi behavior in the Warsaw Ghetto.

Nevertheless, of a writer with Miss Hasan's ability to be self-critical as well as self-respecting, one may hope for better things. In the book's supreme example of her capacity for self-correction, she tells how the novelist A.B. Yehoshua proves to her that she is hypocritical to claim she accepts the existence of a Jewish state while insisting at the same time that Is-

rael can justify its existence only by being an exemplary society. "This recognition—that despite the many pronouncements I made to others and the things I told myself, part of me still held out against fully accepting the Jewish state—was very unsettling."

Since Israel appears destined to have enemies, Israelis and supporters of Israel alike should pray for more enemies like Sana Hasan, perhaps in the words that John Stuart Mill once recommended for such occasions: "Lord, enlighten thou our enemies . . . sharpen their wits, give acuteness to their perceptions, and consecutiveness and clearness to their reasoning powers: we are in danger from their folly, not from their wisdom; their weakness is what fills us with apprehension, not their strength."

Fordism & Its Discontents

THE NEXT LEFT: THE HISTORY OF A FUTURE. By MICHAEL HARRINGTON. *Holt*. 197 pp. \$17.95.

Reviewed by LARRY D. NACHMAN

MICHAEL HARRINGTON'S *The Next Left*, a work of unrelieved economic argument, aims to demonstrate that the prosperity Americans believe they enjoy is both shaky and illusory. "The West," Harrington claims, "is living through an economic and social crisis so unprecedented in its tempo, so complex in its effects, that there are many who do not even know that it is taking place." Yet this truth, Harrington argues, will soon become clear to all, and the Left will then have an opportunity to lead us out of our current dismal state into an era of social justice and stable, real prosperity.

What is thus established at the very beginning of this book is the supposedly sharp disjuncture between a significant reality and the ordinary experience of most people from whom this reality is hidden. If experience is unreliable, so must be the assessments and judgments arrived at on the basis of that ex-

perience. The choices which people make in the marketplace and in the voting booth are thus the results of deception.

The Next Left focuses its attack on the cause of this great deception: capitalism in general, "Fordism" in particular. The latter term refers, of course, to Henry Ford, and specifically to his policy of paying workers wages that were far higher than the norm at the time. Ford, Harrington suggests, should have "an age named after him," for although he did not fully understand the implications of his act, he had discovered an insidious mechanism for deceiving the working class into believing that capitalism could be beneficial to it. In brief, by being offered more money, workers would be beguiled into abandoning their otherwise militant opposition to the system.

The bribe has worked. In return for homes, furniture, cars, clothes, radios and then televisions, and more leisure to enjoy these useless objects, American workers not only do not seek to overthrow the capitalist system, they even have ceased to think of themselves as workers: ask a member of the American working class today what level of society he belongs to, and he will usually answer that he is middle-class.

Harrington is quick to point out that these changes, seemingly so beneficial to workers, were not wrought out of altruism or a sense of social justice. Capitalism has provided "not simply high wages and a modicum of decency for the workers, but those things *in order to expand the power of corporate America*." The resulting general prosperity is the consequence of corporate greed and of the reckless pursuit of profit.

One might ask why the motives should matter if the results have been good ones. Might we not have here an application of Adam Smith's "invisible hand," according to which economic success goes to those who provide what others want? Harrington, however, is interested in political as well as economic benefits, and political benefits of more than one kind:

The possibility . . . of a society established by an affluent elite

and an unhappy but not desperate middle, while the bottom is marginalized—is not simply morally intolerable. It also threatens to destroy the social base of the Left.

There are a number of questionable assumptions in this statement. How unhappy is the middle, and where or when has it been happier? What is the status of the "bottom" in America as compared with its status in other, non-capitalist societies? Answers to such questions, by no means clear-cut, point to more complex considerations than Harrington is willing to entertain. But the thrust of his remarks here is in any case not to judge the American status quo in comparison with other societies or with possibilities within our own society. His main worry is, rather, political: the system, by succeeding, has destroyed, or will destroy, the "social base"—that is, the hope of political victory—of the Left.

The "United States," Harrington writes, "is, in political and legislative terms, the most backward of advanced societies. It is the only developed capitalism without a significant socialist movement. . . ." One notes that to Harrington the absence of a socialist movement is itself a criterion, and the main criterion, of economic and political backwardness. What he means is that Americans (because of "Fordism") have not, do not, and probably will not vote for socialists. This is the specter that haunts 20th-century socialists: that the system whose faults they abhor has won the allegiance of the very groups they claim to speak for. No wonder they aim, not for the amelioration of that system in directions of which they approve but which would leave its essential structure intact, but for the replacement of the system by another.

MUCH of Harrington's work is taken up with an analysis meant to support his thesis that the system of "Fordism" is, in fact, at long last unraveling, and that its structural defects will, "within the next five years," present an opportunity throughout the West for

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the Left to come to power. It is unprofitable to argue with this proposition. Five years is not a long time, and most of us will be alive to see whether or not Harrington is right.

It is, however, interesting to note Harrington's prescriptions for the moment when the Left will have power within its reach. Many of his proposals are familiar and predictable: more meaningful work, redistribution of income, greater worker participation, a thirty-five-hour work week. (One might ask: does not a nine-to-five workday with an hour for lunch already constitute a thirty-five-hour work week, and is not such a work week common in this country?) But at least one of his proposals takes us to the center of a political debate which has been going on for more than a century:

[In planning] the government should be required to rely on a national-needs inventory, which will involve local planning groups with competent staffs stating their priorities.

The very term "national-needs inventory" suggests that needs can be determined in this manner, i.e., from the center. Harrington's concession to "local planning groups" notwithstanding, what is lacking here is any deference to the competence of individuals or communities to determine their own needs and their own priorities, any recognition of their ability to register their decisions democratically in an election or individually in a marketplace.

Socialists, of course, would maintain that (under current circumstances) such decisions are not truly free. But it is rather for them to face up to the anti-democratic implications of their own position. It is simply not enough to protest, as Harrington does, that he is a "democratic socialist." What will remain of democratic decision-making after the task of determining "national needs" is transferred to public bodies whose competence to judge will be guaranteed solely by their putatively superior commitment to the public interest? The dictatorship of the proletariat was the product of precisely such a line of thought.

Imaginary Empire

THE SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP: ANGLO-AMERICAN RELATIONS SINCE 1945. Edited by WM. ROGER LOUIS and HEDLEY BULL. *Oxford University Press*. 408 pp. \$59.00.

Reviewed by GEORGE SZAMUELY

THE widespread use of the term "American imperialism" must be counted among the more significant features of the post-1945 political world. Its deployment is confined neither to Left nor to Right; neither to supporters nor to critics of U.S. foreign policy; neither to idealists nor to adherents of realpolitik; neither to neutralists nor to "cold warriors." The basic idea underlying the term is that there exists a "tacit" or "informal" American empire, synonymous in geographical land mass with Latin America, Western Europe, large parts of Africa, Southwest Asia, and the Far East—in fact, with what is usually known as the non-Communist world. We are asked to believe that behind the apparently haphazard, confused, self-serving, and short-sighted maneuverings in Washington there has unfolded the coherent grand strategy of an imperial power.

But it is all very odd, since before 1941, and despite the annexation of the Philippines or Guam or Puerto Rico, hardly anyone would have dreamed of describing the United States as an imperialist power. And even today there is something strange in ascribing imperial proclivities to a nation which, to say the least, hardly possesses that sense of imperial destiny, that overriding moral purpose, that unconditional commitment, which we normally associate with empires and empire builders. Indeed, so "tacit" and "informal" an empire is this that both rulers and subjects seem quite happy to keep the details of their relationship a closely guarded secret.

All this is brought to mind by *The Special Relationship*, which explores in considerable detail the

negotiations, the rivalry, the wheeling-and-dealing that took place from 1945 on between the newly arrived nuclear superpower and the leading, albeit steeply declining, imperial power of the period. But the picture that emerges from this book—the result of a collaboration between the Ditchley Foundation of England and the Woodrow Wilson Center in Washington, and based on papers delivered at three conferences held in 1984-85—is very different from the fashionable one in which the Americans are supposed to have coveted the British empire, helped themselves to its prize exhibits, and obtained all the perquisites of empire without any of the costs. If the picture presented here is true, the notion of the tacit and informal American empire becomes meaningless.

THE Britain that came out of World War II was desperately impoverished but still in possession of a potentially lucrative empire, whose upkeep, however, required a considerable expenditure of resources no longer at its disposal. But the British did have something big going for them. This was their wartime alliance with the most formidable economic and military power in the world, an Anglophone nation possessed of social and political institutions similar to their own. Surely such a close friend and ally would help out. It was with something like that very much in mind that Churchill invented the term "special relationship."

The only problem was that the United States, having originally come into existence by fighting a war against this same British empire, had no intention now of underwriting it, especially when—as in the economic system of Imperial Preference which discriminated against imports from outside the British empire—it was detrimental to American interests to do so. To the disgust of the British political class, the Americans appeared to be serious about free trade, national self-determination, and constitutional government. The high-minded rhetoric concerning the "right of self-determination" in the Atlantic Charter of August 1941, taken by the British

GEORGE SZAMUELY, a new contributor, was formerly assistant editor of the *London Times Literary Supplement*.

to refer exclusively to nations suffering under Nazi subjugation, was understood by their American counterparts to refer to all peoples living under the rule of foreign masters, and that meant the millions of Asians and Africans having to endure the domination of the Europeans.

Nevertheless, within five years of the issuing of that document American attitudes were to undergo substantial modification. From 1945 onward the threat from Communism in general and the Soviet Union in particular meant that the vexed issues surrounding decolonization, the future of the relationship between the West and Asia and Africa, the kinds of government that would succeed the colonial administrators—all became matters of secondary importance. True, American officials constantly expostulated on the need to move rapidly toward independence, and on the danger of the Communists seizing the banner of nationalism if there was any delay. But in practice the

Americans did very little about it. The British and the other European powers were simply allowed to get on with it, with virtually no interference.

This was for a good reason. As Lord Beloff notes in his contribution to *The Special Relationship*: "There was a feeling in some British as well as American quarters that if the British imperial system were to be written off there would be strategic consequences, since the United States would have to develop its own power to fill the vacuum created." And he quotes from a dispatch of the British ambassador to Washington in 1944: "[American] attacks on the empire reveal conflicting tendencies. On the one hand there has been an increased realization of America's own interest in the perpetuation of the empire for strategic reasons. . . . On the other hand from the economic standpoint the belief has gained strength that British and American interests conflict all along the line."

It cannot be pointed out too frequently that since 1945 successive United States administrations have believed that there are more urgent priorities than the pursuit of economic advantage. This record is all the more remarkable when one recalls the suspicion and alarm with which British Tories—the first, but by no means the last, proponents of the notion of the tacit and informal American empire—viewed the postwar economic policies of the United States, which they took to be no more than ploys to acquire the British empire at a bargain-basement price.

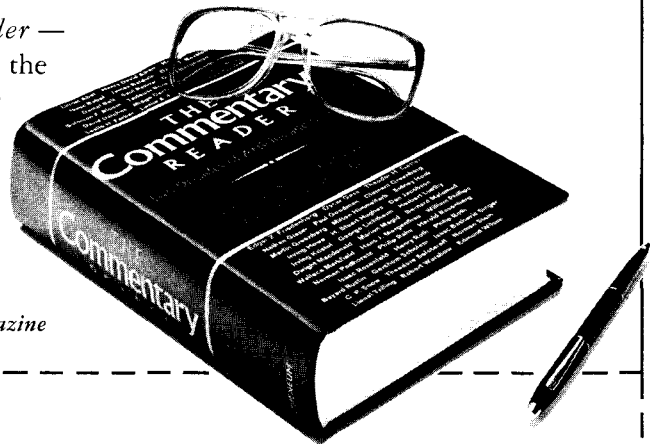
For example, when the British government revealed in 1945 that it had, while negotiating the repayment of lend-lease in 1941-42, committed itself to the elimination of economic discrimination against non-empire goods, British politicians were in an uproar: Lord Croft declared that this was an "interference with the freedom of our own country to manage its affairs

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that I regard as unparalleled in the history of the world." And one MP, Beverly Baxter, threatened: "If the government tries to eliminate Empire Preference a number of us will light the very beacons on the hills. We will attack them in the marketplace, in the towns and the cities, we will rouse this whole country against them in such a crusade as will overcome this government. . . ."

These outbursts were by no means confined to backwoods Tory politicians. Sir Roger Makins, the British ambassador to Washington, was being less than diplomatic when he wrote (in 1954): "There is on our side a very understandable suspicion that the Americans are out to take our place in the Middle East." Selwyn Lloyd, Britain's hapless Foreign Secretary during the Suez crisis of 1956, bitterly described American policy in the Middle East as a combination of "anti-colonialism and hard-headed oil-tycoonery." Leopold Amery, Secretary of State for India during World War II, once declared that he would prefer Hitler's "New Order" to Cordell Hull's "Free Trade." And even today, a sympathetic observer like David Reynolds, writing of the American commitment to free trade in his contribution to the present collection, remarks rather sourly that "it is undoubtedly true . . . that the American conversion to Cobdenite values conveniently fitted the interests of a country able to dominate an open, global market economy."

BUT all these fears were entirely beside the point. The United States has been committed far more deeply to maintaining the unity of the West than to ensuring that the principles of free trade are being observed. The French, the Belgians, and the Dutch, by associating their former colonies with the European Economic Community, created "trade preferences" clearly in violation of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), yet the Americans chose to say nothing for the sake of allied cohesion. Likewise they turned a blind eye to the British practice of state trading—

bulk purchases of agricultural goods—which was also a transgression of the provisions of GATT. As Richard N. Gardner argues here, the Americans have eagerly endorsed the European Economic Community all along, though it became obvious quite early that it would emerge as a closed trading group extremely detrimental to American interests.

The instances can be multiplied. When American oil companies began to expand their activities in the Middle East, the State Department issued instructions that under no circumstances were they to challenge British interests there. Though there was widespread alarm that the United States was out to destroy the "sterling area," no sooner was Libya granted independence in 1951 than the Americans encouraged it to enter this economic unit since they were planning to build a military base there and needed British cooperation in order to do so. Indeed, the "sterling area," which continued to operate for many years after World War II, collapsed finally as a result of British economic weakness rather than American pressure. Nor, despite all the anguish, did the system of Imperial and, subsequently, Commonwealth Preference end until Britain joined the European Economic Community. And as for decolonization, Wm. Roger Louis concludes that, far from fearing American cajolery, "the British had their own reasons for precipitous decolonization, hoping to retain economic and political influence in return for a quick transfer of power."

The importance of strategic and political considerations as against economic ones was shown in 1962, with Polaris, and again in 1980, with Trident, when the United States agreed to sell Britain its most advanced nuclear systems on extraordinarily generous terms. (All Britain had to pay for Polaris was the cost of the missiles and a 5-percent surcharge as a contribution to American research and development costs.) These were hardly the actions of a power eager to maintain the appropriate imperial relationships of subordination and hierarchy.

And yet the legend persists to this day—especially in Britain—that somehow or other the Americans helped themselves to the European empires. Or even if they did not actually help themselves they set out to destroy the empires. Or even if they did not actually destroy them they did nothing to save them. And today, we are asked to believe, we are living with the consequences of this wanton naiveté and obstinacy. Famine, pestilence, civil wars, genocide—all this because the Americans refused to heed the advice of the Europeans (who could run the affairs of Asians and Africans to their own and to the West's advantage) and insisted that independent government was synonymous with good government, and that since the American people were the revolutionary people *par excellence* the newly-emancipated colonial subjects were bound to turn to them for inspiration. The most important virtue of *The Special Relationship* is that it exposes this interpretation of post-war European-American relations as a grotesque caricature of reality.

For Interpretation

MIDRASH AND LITERATURE. Edited by GEOFFREY H. HARTMAN and SANFORD BUDICK. *Yale University Press*. 412 pp. \$28.95.

Reviewed by BARUCH HOCHMAN

OVER the past fifteen years or so, literary studies in our leading universities have undergone a complete turnabout. Ever since the late 20's students of literature had learned to celebrate the literary work of art for its unity, its coherence, and its detachment from the muck and moil of life. Students brought up in the traditions of the New Criticism were told that there were two cardinal errors to be avoided in literary study: the "genetic fallacy," which involves relating a work of literature to its origins, and the "affective fallacy," by which literature is under-

BARUCH HOCHMAN teaches literature at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. His most recent book is *Character in Literature* (Cornell University Press).

stood in terms of the response it evokes in its reader. For the New Critics, the literary work—poem, story, novel, play—existed in splendid isolation; only through assiduous explication of the text itself could the critic approach its true meaning.

All this changed in the wake of the anti-establishment agitation of the 60's. Instead of elevating the literary work above time, scholars now began to reimmerge it in the flux of history. Anyone leafing through the post-60's convention programs of the Modern Language Association (the guild of university teachers of literature) will find himself confronting an array of extra-literary approaches to literature—Marxist, Freudian, feminist, gay, deconstructionist, etc.—all of them sharing a common urge to dissolve the boundaries separating the work of art from its surroundings, to probe the text for as many “unstable” elements as it will yield, and to give increasing prominence to the reader's response in establishing the meaning of a work.

GIVEN this altered climate of interpretation, it is perhaps not so surprising to find the term *midrash*—the ancient, elaborate, word-obsessed, rabbinic way of interpreting the Bible—cropping up every so often in the academy these days. With growing frequency one hears talk of an affinity between literary study and this time-honored mode of biblical exegesis.

The present volume, which grew out of a year-long seminar on the subject at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, affirms this affinity. In their introduction, the book's editors—Geoffrey Hartman, the Yale critic of comparative literature, and Sanford Budick, a Milton scholar who teaches at the Hebrew University—offer grounds for linking *midrash* and literature. In effect they suggest that *midrash* may serve as an analogue, perhaps even as a model, for literary criticism, and they offer their collection as an occasion for exploring that possibility.

The volume does not really serve as such an occasion, however. To begin with, none of the essays on either *midrash* or literature

really adheres with any conviction to the theoretical model proposed, or comes to grips with the implications of juxtaposing two such dramatically disparate entities. The best of the essays on literature—Sanford Budick's explication of a difficult passage in *Paradise Lost*, Harold Fisch's analysis of *Robinson Crusoe*—actually practice fairly traditional methods of literary criticism. At the same time, the most original of the essays on *midrash* itself—Betty Roitman's account of the *midrashic* vision—suggests the incompatibility of a religious tradition based on faith with a secular “tradition” that has come to assume readers may read anything in any way they choose to. Nor do the curious examples of contemporary writing which are proposed as a kind of modern *midrash*—Geoffrey Hartman's intriguing interpretation of the story in Genesis of Jacob wrestling with the angel, or Jacques Derrida's meditation on some poems by Paul Celan—do anything to elucidate the process of traditional *midrashic* procedure, and its real or imagined relevance to literary criticism.

What the collection does offer is a good, though partial, and (for the beginner at least) excessively oblique introduction to *midrash* itself. There is a fine selection of essays by several generations of scholars—including Judah Goldin, Michael Fishbane, James Kugel, David Stern, and Moshe Idel—dealing with the origins, the nature, the motives, and, to a limited degree, the methods of interpretation which constitute *midrash*. What they establish is the underlying integrity and implicit unity of a body of vastly heterogeneous materials, generated over some 1,500 years, from the period in which the biblical canon was closed in the first centuries before the Common Era to the emergence of *kabbalah* in the late Middle Ages.

Such unity is shown to derive from the highly dynamic effort by generations of rabbis and scholars to make the truths enshrined in the sanctified text of the Bible real and accessible to a community of believers, a community living in times and places far removed from

the Bible itself. What also emerges is the “dialogic” vigor with which these scholars interrogated their text, and the freedom with which they permitted themselves to converse with it and with the divinity whose utterance it was taken to be. More striking even than these qualities, however, is the degree of intimacy evident in the encounter between the masters of *midrash* and their texts.

It is clearly this intimacy, and the freedom it entails, which is coveted most of all by those contemporary literary critics who see *midrash*—with its incessant revision of its primary text, and its apparent willingness to break down the barriers between the text and its interpreters—as a kindred enterprise. Yet the most cursory summary of *midrashic* method should suffice to show the inapplicability of the model and the dangers of *midrash* as an interpretive method for the study of literature.

The rabbis followed an ingenious procedure. First they posited the absolute inviolability of Scripture as the sacred Word of God. Then they sanctified not only the text as a whole, but also every word, syllable, and letter of it. Having done so, they then felt authorized to abrogate its manifest meanings in a quest for the ultimate, divinely predetermined meaning which they assumed was there all along in the words of their text.

To arrive at that meaning, the rabbis evolved a number of interpretive strategies. These ranged from forthright allegory, in which one thing in the text is made to stand for another (a cat, for instance, to signify Egypt), to such intricate word-plays as *gematria*, a method of adding up the numerical equivalent of all the letters in a word, then substituting for that word in the text another having nothing in common with it but the same numerical equivalent. In this way, words and phrases plucked from disparate contexts were juxtaposed and conflated in order to elucidate some textual problem under examination. Such problems might range from the question of God's intentions in creating the

world, to the number of hands' breadths between the "waters below" and the "waters above" mentioned in Genesis 3; from the question of what the matriarch Sarah felt when Abraham took their son Isaac away to be sacrificed, to some fine point of law or prophecy.

PLYING their interpretive craft as they did, the rabbis necessarily broke up and segmented their texts, and in ways that can frankly make it difficult, if not sometimes impossible, for modern readers to find their way back to the plain meaning. And here we arrive at the first of the oddities in espousing midrash as a model for literary criticism. Although it is true that all forms of interpretation intervene between us and the texts we read—both Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and Cervantes's *Don Quixote*, for example, are encrusted with centuries of quotation, commentary, and interpolation—it nevertheless seems to me that midrash, with its elaborate play of fancy and frantic wrenching of language, sets up a barrier more solid than that of most traditions of literary criticism. Thus, even from a narrowly literary point of view, midrash would seem to offer a model of doubtful utility to anyone genuinely looking for new and more suggestive ways to trap the meanings of primary texts.

But that is hardly all. There is no doubt that what the rabbis did, they did, so to speak, in good faith; they seem to have had an extraordinary gift of bifocal vision, which enabled them to preserve a sense of the unity and sanctity of the founding text even while they were apparently engaged in dismembering it. If they felt free to work and rework both the text of the Bible itself and the tradition they based upon it, it was only because they did so in the name of the truth and with the serene conviction of the oneness of their sacred text. Contemporary critics, by contrast, tend to hold that there can be no such unity in a text—that the very idea of unity is either a falsification or a foolish illusion. So in a crucial sense their appropriation of the midrashic model is

undertaken if not actually in bad faith then at least in the thrall of self-deception, for they are in the end invoking a model based on supreme authority to undermine the principle of authority itself.

In turning to midrash, finally, today's critics not only misapprehend the value of the model—what it is, what it is good for—but open a way to misapprehending or undercutting the value of literature itself. Unlike midrash, and certainly unlike Scripture, literature has rarely claimed the authority of truth, and may even be said to begin where absolute authority, the authority of faith, ends; yet for secular cultures like our own, literature does still serve, however tenuously, as one vital repository of meaning. Even if it does not and cannot achieve the status which the Bible held for the rabbis, or the permanence of those immortal monuments of brass to which the classical poets aspired, that is no reason to render it, by interpretation, as fluid as running water.

Indeed, to apply the midrashic model to literature without the benefit of a centering vision is to be in danger of abandoning the effort to locate meaning altogether, whether in texts or in the world. The chief deficiency of the present volume, despite its strengths, is that it nowhere engages such issues, even to rebut them.

The Vocation of Politics

NIXON: THE EDUCATION OF A POLITICIAN 1913-1962. By STEPHEN E. AMBROSE. *Simon & Schuster*. 732 pp. \$22.95.

Reviewed by
RICHARD JOHN NEUHAUS

DURING his 1962 bid for the California governorship, Richard Nixon was not helped by the remark of the master of ceremonies

RICHARD JOHN NEUHAUS is director of the Rockford Institute Center on Religion and Society in New York. His latest book is *The Catholic Moment: The Paradox of the Church in the Postmodern World*, which Harper & Row is publishing this month.

at one of his fund-raising dinners: "Too many people are saying, 'I don't like Nixon, but I don't know why.'"

People are still saying that. On the other hand, many say that they do not just not like Nixon, they hate him—and they think they know why. During the same 1962 race, the pollster Samuel Lubell found "an almost unbelievable personal bitterness toward Nixon among many California voters." Toward very few contemporary politicians (Senator Edward Kennedy comes to mind) is there a widespread animosity intense and nasty enough to warrant the word hatred. Richard Nixon has known what it means to be hated since his first, and successful, race for Congress against Jerry Voorhis in 1946.

Now, thirteen years after he resigned from the Presidency in disgrace, we are told that Nixon is back. His rehabilitation, if that is what it is, will likely be advanced by this first volume of Stephen Ambrose's biography. Ambrose, professor of history at the University of New Orleans, is given a large part of the credit for the enhanced standing of Eisenhower in recent years. It was no little achievement that Ambrose's two-volume biography helped rescue Eisenhower from the derision of his detractors. To rescue Nixon from the hatred of his enemies is much the more daunting task. Those who have a deep stake in despising Richard Nixon are almost certainly not going to be converted by this volume. But those who have disliked him for reasons they did not quite understand will have occasion to think again. They may not turn to actually liking Nixon, but they may leave this book sharing Ambrose's respect for the man.

As Gary Hart has recently discovered to his sorrow, Americans are not very good at separating personality (some call it character) from the issues. Unlike Hart, and despite several efforts to pin him with the charge of taking money on the side, Richard Nixon has been above reproach in his personal life. To put it differently, his personal life has been his political purpose.

The elusiveness of the private

Nixon, which is presumably the real Nixon, is a constant theme in this book, as it has been in most writing about Nixon. The absence of evidence on this score is interpreted as an invitation to speculate and has been seized with enthusiasm by writers with an argument to make. Thus we have been favored with David Abrahamsen's *Nixon vs. Nixon: An Emotional Tragedy*, Bruce Mazlish's *In Search of Nixon: A Psychohistorical Inquiry*, Fawn Brodie's *Richard Nixon: The Shaping of His Character*, and Garry Wills's *Nixon Agonistes: The Crisis of the Self-Made Man*. The last, in sharp contrast to Wills's more recent fabrications regarding Ronald Reagan, has the merit of being an imaginative exercise of considerable force. But Ambrose departs from this genre altogether. He appears to be one of those historians who believe that in the absence of evidence you should not make it up.

WHAT is known about the personal Nixon—and Ambrose's researches seem to be exhaustive—is told here with care and economy. Nixon's private life is, for the most part, his family life. In this connection, Ambrose's treatment of Pat Nixon is extensive and unstinting in its admiration. Far from her being "Plastic Pat," always playing whatever role her husband dictated for the moment, one gains the impression of a gracefully determined woman who had securely ordered her loves and loyalties, putting Richard Nixon and his public career at the top of the list.

It seems that Nixon was intimate with no one else. Those who, like Bebe Rebozo, were deemed to be close friends appear to have been useful sycophants, although Ambrose does not use the term. From his school days in Whittier, California, through his law-school years at Duke, and during his time in the Navy, many people respected and trusted Nixon, but almost to a person they say they never really knew him. In the early years, before he ran for political office, Ambrose reports that everyone agrees Richard Nixon was precisely the kind of man from whom one would not hesitate to buy a used car. But

from the first campaign his politics was the politics of division, and then many began to dislike, distrust, and hate him, even as many others came to support and admire him, but seldom to like, never mind love, him.

Ambrose is telling a story more than he is making an argument. And yet the story is interspersed with judgments, and his judgments are frequently inconsistent. One consistent judgment, however, is that Richard Nixon was always much more at ease before a crowd than in person-to-person contacts, especially with his peers. We are told that Nixon was one of the great politicians of the century but he could never, like FDR or Lyndon Johnson, work personality and friendship to political purpose. To support Richard Nixon was to support his policies, and the career that advanced those policies. His life, we are led to conclude, is one of sweated earnestness, of competition without camaraderie. There

were personal alliances but few personal bonds, and those alliances were always aimed at moving the crowds, which is to say, the voters. The goal was to get a majority by division. Ambrose observes: "He divided people along party lines, but he refused to use race, class, or religion as his issues. In these areas, where the American people were already sharply divided, Nixon tried to bring them together."

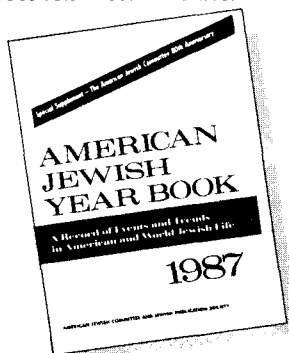
That observation comes in connection with the 1960 race against John F. Kennedy, which Ambrose thinks was Nixon's finest. Throughout the period covered by this first volume, however, Nixon refused to exploit some of the deepest fissures in the American public, especially that of race. Some readers may be surprised to learn how deep and consistent was Nixon's support for civil rights. He was much respected by key black leaders, although that respect was seldom translated into votes, and Nixon's position on race placed a severe strain on his rela-

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tions with the right wing of the Republican party which was his core constituency.

AMBROSE, who apparently started out not thinking very highly of Richard Nixon, says at several points that Nixon was a great man. What makes for greatness is a subject of interminable debate, but Ambrose's telling of the story fails to persuade at least this reader that the Nixon portrayed here is a great man. He is convincingly presented as a man relentless in the pursuit of his goals, possessed of a powerful sense of political responsibility, and unswervingly faithful to a few guiding ideas.

The word faithful has a religious ring, and that seems entirely appropriate to the Nixon portrayed. Formal religion, in his case Quaker religion, played little evident part in Nixon's life after his teen-age years. Presumably his many and long discussions with Billy Graham had something to do with religion (it is hard to imagine Mr. Graham discussing much else for very long). But one is led to believe that the religion to which Richard Nixon was faithful was the religion of political purpose.

This is to say something more than that politics—in the sense of the contest for power—was Nixon's religion. To make politics one's religion is, religiously speaking, idolatrous and, psychologically speaking, disastrous. Nixon's religion of political purpose was more elevated than that. Although Ambrose does not put it this way, the Nixon of this book had a calling, a vocation, to advance a great truth, and that truth was political freedom.

It was a truth well worth divid-

ing people over. More precisely, Nixon's purpose was to bring to political expression the fact that people were already divided over the importance of freedom. Nixon, in short, was an anti-Communist. That was the most important political thing he was, and the most important thing he was was political.

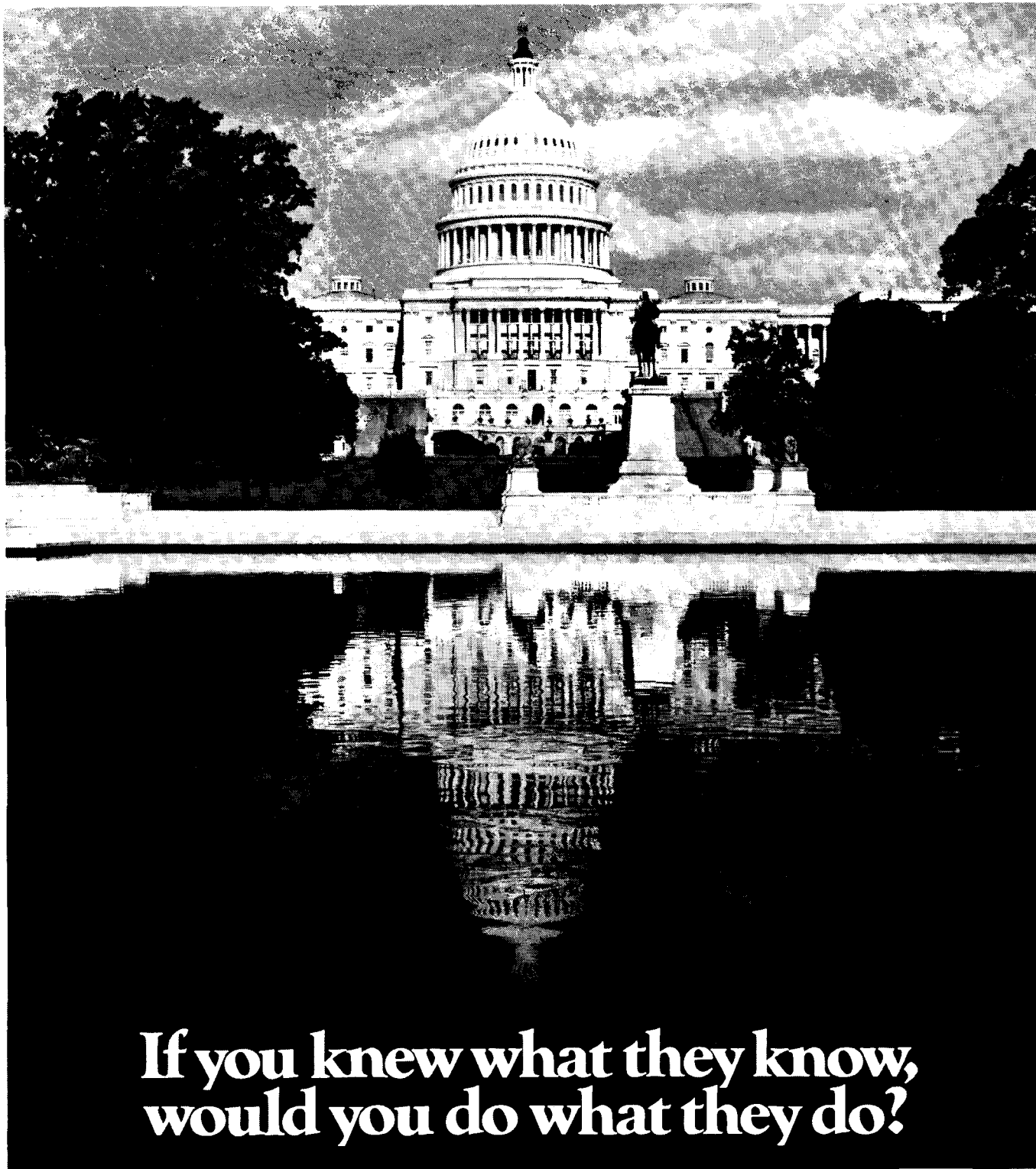
In Alger Hiss the calling and the occasion converged to make Nixon a national figure of consequence. Alger Hiss was in his view neither eccentric nor deviant but a representative of the enemy. For Nixon, the nature and mission of the enemy were discovered in the Hiss case and diagnosed in Whitaker Chambers's *Witness*. This was the dark antithesis to freedom's truth and, in the opinion of many, the dark side of Richard Nixon. Behind Herblock's caricature of a sleazy and tricky Nixon they detected a sinister Nixon in the grips of a metaphysical obsession with the threat of Communism.

The argument might be made that Nixon would not have encountered such animosity had he been as musical in articulating freedom's cause as he was combative in opposing freedom's foes. But that would be to overlook the fact that there were, and are, enemies of the democratic proposition whose hatred of Nixon was eminently sensible from their viewpoint. No mere change of "style" would have won them over. As for those who were put off by Nixon's belligerent manner, Ambrose's account suggests that he rendered a service by tempering and bringing into the mainstream of democratic discourse whatever was legitimate in the screeds of the reckless and

extreme, such as Joseph McCarthy and the John Birch Society.

THE meaning of the subtitle of this first volume, "The Education of a Politician," is not self-evident and is not explained. If education means growth and learning, there is little education here. There is no indication that Nixon read anything or talked with anyone about matters not directly related to the advancement of his political purpose. There is no evidence of intellectual curiosity ranging beyond the boundaries of the work that was his to do. By the end of his formal education Nixon knew that he had a remarkable capacity for leadership by virtue of hard work, combative engagement, and persuasive talent. By the end of his first term in Congress he knew that he had found his cause in anti-Communism. The rest is detail.

That is not to say that the rest is dull. In fact this telling of Nixon's story entails all the dramas, high and low, that shaped our political culture as we entered the night of the 60's. *Nixon* is competently, sometimes brightly, written, and one gets the impression that Ambrose is striving, above all, to be assiduously fair. In that he seems to have succeeded. As for the Richard Nixon we meet here, the subtitle might better have been "The Vocation of a Politician"—and to that vocation he was faithful. Of course this volume takes us only to 1962 and we are inclined to read the story through the lens of subsequent events. It is the notable achievement of Stephen Ambrose that he compels us to reread subsequent events through the lens of the story he tells.



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